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The Reaction of America, the Commonweal, and the Catholic World to Italian Fascism

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THE REACTION OF AMERICA, THE COMMONWEAL,
AND THE CATHOLIC WORLD
TO ITALIAN FASCISM

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
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LIFE

Samuel Anthony Marotta was born in Chicago, Illinois, on April 12, 1932.

After graduating from Loyola Academy, Chicago, Illinois, in June 1950 he began his undergraduate studies at Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois in September 1950.

He entered the Society of Jesus at Sacred Heart Novitiate, Milford, Ohio, on September 1, 1952, transferring at that time to Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1956 he transferred to West Baden College of Loyola University and there received the Bachelor of Arts degree in June 1957. He then entered the Graduate School of Loyola University.

To Frank

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis purports to examine a tiny part of the world's reaction to the monster of totalitarianism which the world has seen in the twentieth century. Authoritarian Europe in the thirties presented a spectacle which was a threat to the basic principles of the West, as did Communist Russia, which in many ways showed the world a worse spectacle.

Specifically, this thesis will examine the official reaction of a definite part of the American Catholic press to Italian Fascism. The Catholic Church was in a period of crisis wherever it coexisted with a dictatorship, and in Italy this was the situation. What was the reaction of Catholics to this crisis the Church was passing through? This thesis will examine the mind of Catholics as it showed itself in a part of the American Catholic press, namely in America, the Commonweal, and the Catholic World.

It will be necessary to start our investigation with the First World War, for the history of Italy during the Fascist era can only be understood in the light of this war and the problems resulting from it, since from the ashes of the Great War was born

that peculiar form of modern totalitarianism which existed in Italy from 1922 until 1943. At first Italy remained neutral, but in 1915, after making the secret Treaty of London with England and France, she entered the conflict on the side of the Allies. Her motive was to join the side she thought would win, and so to acquire as much territory as possible at the expense of the Central Powers. This Sacred Selfishness¹ was the principle which guided Premier Orlando and Foreign Minister Sonnino at the Paris Peace Conference after the war. However, frustration was what Italy received from the negotiations, frustration because Italy wanted more than the Treaty of London assigned her. The symbol of this frustration became the city of Fiume on the Adriatic Sea. In the name of reason and justice Fiume became strategically necessary as Italy's natural frontier with Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, President Wilson became intransigent on this point, and appealed to the Italian people over the heads of their elected representatives.² This however was of no avail, for the nationalism of the people demanded that their selfishness be heeded. When in 1920, Italy and Yugoslavia signed the Treaty of Rapallo, in which Fiume was to become an open city, there were many in

¹Luigi Sturzo, Italy and Fascism (New York, 1927), p. 34.

²René Albrecht-Carrié, Italy at the Paris Peace Conference (New York, 1938), p. 141.

the country who thought that Italy had reached the nadir of degradation.³

It can be seen then that the people of Italy were very dissatisfied with the outcome of the peace conference. True, she had received the South Tyrol, the Julian March, and some islands in the Adriatic, but the loss of the important port of Fiume, with its large Italian population was, in their eyes, a violation of the very principle that Wilson had so strongly urged, namely, the principle of national self-determination.

In addition, the frustration in Italy was increased by the poor economic situation of the country, for she came out of the war in a worse condition than any other country except Russia. The economy was dislocated, unemployment and inflation were increasing, and there were many war debts. The pressing social question had not been alleviated, for both North and South Italy were in turmoil. There were numerous strikes and riots in the industrial North, while in the agricultural South, many of the peasants were seizing the land.

There is no doubt that the government was weak and ineffective, and was so for a long time. The failure to develop a sound foundation for parliamentary government was a cardinal reason preparing the way for the dictatorship. This parliamentarism⁴

³H. Stuart Hughes, The United States and Italy (Cambridge, 1953), p. 61.

⁴Sturzo, Italy and Fascism, p. 70.

by which no real political parties were developed, political issues were not clarified, and political leaders became irresponsible and often corrupt, so weakened the government, that as a result, a powerful figure such as Mussolini, with his Fascists and their clubs, could take over the country.

The first elections after the war in November 1919, showed that there were three main parties in Italy, the Socialists, the Populari, and the Liberals. The Populari, who emerged from the elections with one-fifth of the seats in the Chamber, were a center party of Catholics founded in January 1919 by Don Luigi Sturzo, a priest who was interested and influential in political affairs. Under the Fascists, he was to leave the country, an exile. The party was based on the principles of Christian democracy, and for this it incurred the bitter hostility of Mussolini, who finally had the party disbanded in 1926 when his dictatorship was consolidated.⁵

The parliament that resulted from these elections, which were the first under proportional representation and the first since 1913, was weak and inefficient, for no definite program or leadership resulted. The old master of Italian politics, Giovanni Giolotti, was called to assume the post of Premier in the summer of 1920. However, Giolotti, the man who virtually ruled

⁵Luigi Sturzo, Nationalism and Internationalism (New York, 1946), p. 124.

Italy from 1900 to 1913, was not to prove adequate in the face of this critical post-war period. From 1919 until October 1922 when Mussolini became Premier, there were several attempts to form governments; however, every attempt failed for the Socialists would not unite with the Christian Democrats, nor would the Christian Democrats unite with the Liberals.⁶ As a result, Mussolini, with the connivance of local and central authorities,⁷ demanded that he be given the government to preserve order and repel the Communist threat which really had passed by this time. In the face of the sick ruling class, the King allowed Mussolini to come to Rome on October 28, 1922 and assume the Premiership. Fascism was not inevitable. Had there been a Napoleon in Rome to dissipate the movement with a whiff of grapeshot, it would have collapsed. But there was no Napoleon. There was only weakness everywhere.⁸

Benito Mussolini, born in North Central Italy, came from a poor family. His father, a blacksmith, was a Socialist, and his mother was a devout Catholic. Mussolini himself became a convinced Socialist and anticlerical during his twenties. He led a scattered life, spending some time in jail, and being expelled

⁶Ferdinand Hermens, Europe Between Democracy and Anarchy (Notre Dame, 1951), p. 50.

⁷Herman Finer, Mussolini's Italy (New York, 1935), p. 131.

⁸René Albrecht-Carrié, Italy from Napoleon to Mussolini (New York, 1950), p. 146.

from Switzerland and Austria for revolutionary activity and violence.⁹ He became the editor of a Socialist newspaper, Avanti.¹⁰ However, when the First World War came, Mussolini was confronted with a dilemma, for he personally favored Italy's entrance, but the Socialists did not. Accordingly, he broke with the party, and founded his own paper, the Popolo D'Italia.

After the armistice, he founded the Fascist blackshirts in March 1919, at that time merely a group banded together to pursue the common political aim of Socialism and Nationalism. When Gabriele D'Annunzio, an ardent nationalist, led his troops into Fiume in 1919, remaining there fifteen months until the Italian government could oust him, Mussolini whole-heartedly approved of the episode. There are many who see in D'Annunzio the forerunner of Mussolini who was to take over Rome in a manner somewhat similar to D'Annunzio's seizure of Fiume. As the young Fascist movement grew, Fascist squads, with a policy of direct action against the Communists, appeared. Even though largely tinged with Socialism, it came about that these bands opposed any other leftist groups, and accordingly, the support of the middle class was won by them.

Soon, however, the program of the party swung to the right.

⁹Cecil Sprigge, The Developement of Modern Italy (London, 1943), p. 103.

¹⁰Maurice Vaussard, Histoire de L'Italie Contemporaine (Paris, 1950), pp. 170-1.

The Fascists became the protectors of private property, law, and order. They were, in addition, opposed to strikes, Socialism, and class conflict. However, the movement remained based on swift action and violence which was often ruthless.¹¹ Mussolini began to receive more and more support from various groups such as war veterans, disgusted intellectuals, nationalists, property owners, the middle class, and those dissatisfied with the Treaty of Versailles. Although it is difficult to pinpoint, the Fascists received support from some large industrialists who were looking for someone or something to stabilize their interests in the midst of a situation which was likely to break out in civil war.¹²

For these reasons it can be seen that Mussolini's movement, dominated by his powerful personality, came to the point where the governments of certain cities in the North were simply taken over, and the national government was demanded. By refusing to declare martial law, the King gave in lest civil war occur. He asked Mussolini to form a government. The famous March on Rome ushered in a new era of Italian history, an era which today Italians would like to forget.

This designedly brief account of the rise of Fascism is sufficient for the purposes of this thesis. However, it should be

¹¹Finer, p. 132.

¹²Giuseppe Borgese, Goliath: The March of Fascism (New York, 1938), p. 215; Sturzo, Italy and Fascism, p. 111.

remembered that the origin of Fascism, as of all totalitarian regimes, while understandable, is not wholly comprehensible, for in the rise of modern totalitarianism there is an element which is baffling to one who is analysing this peculiar phenomenon.

CHAPTER II

PERIODICAL REACTION 1922-1933

It is now time to examine in detail the periodical reaction to Fascism. There are three main areas in which these magazines express themselves, the internal aspects of the regime, the Church-State relationships, and the external aspects or foreign policy of the regime. Since the magazines which will be considered are all Catholic, it is easy to see that their main concern is about the regime and its compatibility with the Church. This Church-State problem then in all its aspects, is the most important part of the periodical reaction from 1922 until 1933, and accordingly, of the first half of the thesis.

The magazines do not have much to say with regard to the very early years of the new government, since there was difficulty in getting reliable news, and the new movement was so mystifying that they wanted to withhold their opinions until a trend of action could be discerned. America was the first to speak out, when its chronicle reported that despite some past mistakes, it seemed that Premier Mussolini had learned that fidelity to God and to His representatives in authority were essential for the welfare and prosperity not only of Italy but of any country what-

soever.¹ The occasion for this observation was the restoration of the crucifix in the schools in Italy.

There is no doubt that Mussolini tried to win over the Church as soon as he got to power, the restoration of crucifixes being just one of many things he did for the Church.² In addition, he restored a large crucifix to the center of the Coliseum. More examples of favors to the Church came when the government gave the Chigi collection of books and manuscripts to the Vatican Library, and public functions came to include a Mass.³ Consequently, the fears of the Church with regard to this new movement were somewhat allayed during the early years of Fascism. However, it should always be understood that the Fascists resorted to violence whenever they wanted, nor were their motives primarily spiritual. On the other hand, the Church had not been treated so respectfully since 1870, when Rome and the Papal States were forcefully taken from the Pope, with the result that the policy of the Italian government since that time was anticlerical.

In May 1923 the Catholic World was discussing this revival of religion and the government's attempt to curry favor with the Church. "This is all very gratifying and encouraging. But we are not yet prepared to hail Mussolini either as a great con-

¹America, XXVIII (December 23, 1922), 218.

²Daniel A. Binchy, Church and State in Fascist Italy (London, 1941), p. 139.

³Ibid.

structive statesman or as a godsend to the Church. We confess that we are still--perhaps unreasonably--suspicious of the wisdom of his methods, which seem high-handed and occasionally violent. And we would like to know just what he means when he says, 'men nowadays are tired of liberty.'⁴ As will be seen throughout the rest of this study the editor of this monthly review, Reverend James C. Gillis, C.S.P., from the very start was unfavorable to Mussolini and the Fascist government. Father Gillis was the editor of the Catholic World during the whole of the Fascist episode, and accordingly was the sole author of the monthly editorials from that magazine.

Still early in the regime, speaking of Mussolini the demagogue, Father Gillis said, "There may be some guileless persons who imagine that because Mussolini has abandoned his militant atheism of a few years ago, he must be a Christian. Some may even imagine that he is a Catholic. He publicly declared that the religion of the Italian people is Catholicism. That may be, but he, the leader of the Italian people, is a Nietzschean. A Nietzschean Catholic is a 'queer bird.' It is frequently asserted that Mussolini saved not only Italy but Europe from Bolshevism. He may have saved it from Bolshevism, but he did not save it for democracy. He considers democracy absurd."⁵

⁴Catholic World, CXVII (May 1923), 261.

⁵Catholic World, CXX (December 1924), 404-5.

The Commonweal first spoke out in the middle of 1925 saying that anyone who knew Italy should concede that Fascism was doing much to remedy the social situation of the country, but that, nonetheless, the fundamental principle of the movement was as mystifying as it was dangerous. For this reason, it was seen that the position of the Church was not as secure as some Fascist advocates first claimed.⁶

The editor of the Commonweal was Michael Williams, who headed the magazine from its inception in 1924, until 1938 when he became a special editor, but no longer the official editor of this Catholic layman's weekly. The Commonweal encouraged the expression of different views, and so in its pages there are some articles for and against the Fascist experiment in Italy. But since it is our purpose only to examine the official reaction of the magazines in question, as it is seen in the editorials and paragraphic comment, articles will not be considered. Therefore, any quotation from or reference to either the Catholic World, the Commonweal, or America will be from the editorial pages and reflect the official attitude of the magazine in question, unless it is expressly mentioned otherwise.

On the other hand, America, a weekly review founded in 1909 by Jesuits, was under the editorship of Reverend Richard Tierney, S.J. from 1914 until 1925 when he was succeeded by Reverend

⁶Commonweal, II (July 8, 1925), 219-20.

Wilfrid Parsons, S.J. who edited the publication until 1936. Reverend Francis X. Talbot, S.J. then edited the magazine until 1944 when Reverend John LaFarge, S.J. became the editor. America is not an official organ of the Jesuits in America, but is conducted by a group of Jesuits who are trying to express Papal principles in the press, which is likewise the purpose of the other two magazines. America's editorials are written by the staff; however, for most of the period of this thesis Reverend Paul Blakely, S.J., an associate editor of America, was the chief editorial writer of the magazine. The opinions expressed in all three of the magazines are only those of the editors, but since these three organs are among the most outstanding in the American Catholic press, it can safely be said that they do represent to some degree the opinion of American Catholics on Fascism. However, it must be remembered that this degree is limited.

Continuing in the same vein as before, the Commonweal in August 1925 said that it was becoming obvious that various optimistic reports about Mussolini and his party, which were in some cases written by Catholics, and published under Catholic auspices, were premature.⁷ It went on to say that the Holy See was alarmed at the spread of violence among the Fascists, and later, when Mussolini, on the third anniversary of the March on Rome, spoke about the need of each Italian to consider himself

⁷Commonweal, II (August 12, 1925), 319-20.

a molecule pulsating with the entire organism, it claimed that this was a rebuff to human dignity, and indicated that "political salvation for Italy and Fascism too would seem to lie in its prospect of outgrowing the ideals of its founder."⁸

These first few years of the regime in Italy were difficult for the Fascists, for the dictatorship was not yet consolidated. The year 1924 was the year of the Matteotti murder, the Aventine Secession, and the exile of Don Luigi Sturzo.⁹ Once in power, Mussolini secured the passage, on November 14, 1923, of a novel electoral law by which the party that received the most votes--at least twenty-five per cent--would automatically receive two-thirds of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies, thereby controlling all legislation. By use of terror and violence, the Fascists secured the most votes in the elections in April 1924, and as a result, were in a position to gain absolute control of the state. The Chamber opened on May 24, 1924. On June 10th, Giacomo Matteotti, a Socialist deputy who declared the results of the election invalid, was kidnapped, disappeared, and was murder-

⁸Commonweal, III (November 11, 1925), 5-6.

⁹Mario Einaudi and Francois Goguel, Christian Democracy in Italy and France (Notre Dame, 1952), p. 21. Sturzo lived in England from 1924 until 1940, and then in the United States until the end of the Second World War, at which time he returned to his native Italy after 22 years of exile. He has written over twenty books and hundreds of articles in which his idea of Christian democracy plays a large part. He is at present a permanent member of the Italian Senate.

ed by Fascists.¹⁰ On June 12th, the opposition, above all the Popolari and the Socialists, joined in withdrawing from Parliament in a protest which came to be called the Aventine Secession.¹¹ Mussolini himself personally took responsibility for any Fascist actions, in a speech to the Chamber in January 1925.¹² This period was, without a doubt, the critical one through which the Fascists had to pass if they were to continue the government; they passed this crisis largely with the aid of physical force. Mussolini put on an air of respectability by making more overtures to the Church.¹³ Religious teaching was re-introduced into the primary schools.¹⁴ Some monastic buildings were restored to religious orders, and freemasonry was suppressed.¹⁵ However, as has been said, Fascist violence continued especially with regard to the activity of the Popular Party, whose leader, Don Sturzo, by now had resigned under pressure.¹⁶

¹⁰William Elwin, Fascism at Work (London, 1934), p. 52.

¹¹Sturzo, Italy and Fascism, p. 187.

¹²Ibid., 122, 196.

¹³Ibid., 131.

¹⁴Binchy, p. 141.

¹⁵Ibid., 143.

¹⁶Ibid., 152.

In June 1925 Father Gillis of the Catholic World said that readers of that magazine must have noticed that his magazine had never grown over-enthusiastic about Mussolini, while on the other hand, many Catholic observers thought the advent of the scowling dictator was a godsend to the Church in Italy, because Mussolini restored the crucifixes in the schoolrooms. However, from the beginning of Mussolini's career Father Gillis did not think that the means which he used justified the end he attained. Father Gillis went on to say that many well disposed persons who thought that Mussolini had saved Italy from Bolshevism, had waited patiently to see if his methods would become less dictatorial. However, all could see that Mussolini was unwilling to admit that emergency measures could be safely superseded by the customs of civilized government.¹⁷

Up to and including 1925 this is all that these magazines reported about Fascism. America is almost silent. The Commonweal is cautious. The Catholic World from the very start is more than suspicious, even openly hostile, and will continue to be anti-Fascist in the future.

By 1926 Mussolini was a stable dictator, and it was obvious that his government was to be permanent. The verdict of history is that there was not a real threat of Communism in October 1922,

¹⁷Catholic World, CXXI (June 1925), 408-9.

but rather the crisis, whatever it was, had passed, and the economic situation had begun to ease.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is difficult to say that in 1922 this could have been known by enough people to stop the future dictatorship. By using the Church, and making it appear that he had saved a situation which was in ruins, Mussolini built up a strong authoritarian government which was to abrogate many of the civil rights of the people.

It is now necessary to examine the periodical reaction to the early years of the dictatorship after 1926. Speaking of mad Mussolini, the Catholic World said:

Mussolini is running amuck. Who will curb him? The answer seems to be, 'The Pope if anyone.' The dictator is acting like a madman, and as if to prevent his madness from becoming known to the world, he has stifled the Italian press. His bulldozing and fire-eating, his particularly ill-timed militarism, his foolish and frantic speeches . . . make Kaiser Wilhelm seem like a pacifist. . . . If the bulldozing dictator is not quite crazy, he will come out of his frenzy. But if he continues to plunge along like a mad buffalo, with wild mouthings and threats of violence, he will ruin Italy, and perhaps bring on another European war. . . . It may interest the readers of the Catholic World to know that I have received, during the past two years, many articles from Rome, exalting Mussolini as a deliverer of his nation and a benefactor to the Church. I have consistently refused to publish the most eulogistic of them. Indeed, I have admitted to these pages only one article praising Mussolini, and that one merely because I am anxious to present views that are not my own. . . . As for myself, I have considered the man a potential danger to freedom and peace and religion. For that reason, I have suffered some abuse from at least one writer resident in Rome, who told me that, living in America, I could not see what everybody in Rome knew, that Mussolini is the savior of civilization and religion in

¹⁸Sturzo, Italy and Fascism, p. 111.

Italy and all Europe. Well, I have waited, and the months have convinced me that from a distance of 4000 miles I could see more plainly than some of the observers on the spot. Mussolini is mad. . . . I hesitate to assume the role of a prophet . . . but barring the entrance of some entirely unforeseen element into the Italian situation, Mussolini's regime will end in something akin to disaster. There will be a reaction in favor of liberty.¹⁹

The attitude of Father Gillis with regard to the Fascist government will continue in this vein of frankness. It will be interesting and necessary to contrast this regularly hostile view with the early views of America and the Commonweal, which, although they often pointed out what they consider weak points of the regime, are generally favorable to Mussolini.

During this period the Commonweal stressed the fact that Mussolini always spoke in terms of bombast and futurism, and that anything like the virtue of restraint was never heard from the Colossus bestriding the hills of Rome in 1926.²⁰ The Commonweal spoke out often in short paragraphic comment. At one of the attempted assassinations of Mussolini, in September 1926, it mentioned that too many people were giving in to the Duce.²¹ On the occasion of the issuance of the Fascist Charter of Labor, it said that the Fascist charter would not be acceptable in the United

¹⁹Catholic World, CXXII (March 1926), 838-40.

²⁰Commonweal, III (February 17, 1926), 395; III (March 13, 1926), 257.

²¹Commonweal, IV (September 22, 1926), 457.

States, for neither capital nor labor in the United States would be prepared to admit that industrial relations must be determined by arbitration. It went on to give the impression that Mussolini's form of labor might be more efficient than that of this country.²² A few months later, the Commonweal openly gave credit to the regime for what it had done, saying:

Though no American is likely to yearn for the introduction of Mussolini's methods into this country, it seems that all of us ought to concede frankly the value of at least some of those methods to Italy. There is no good reason for doing otherwise, and there is always at least an excuse for being fair. When the New York World, in a recent editorial, quoted approvingly the opinion of Mr. Julius Barnes, who used to be President of the United States Chamber of Commerce, to the effect that Fascism has accomplished nothing which democracy has not done better in this country, it obviously glossed over a most important difference. Mussolini is not governing a nation accustomed to representative institutions and possessed of a great per capita wealth, but trying to rule a people that had gone beyond the verge of self-government in company with an inefficient democracy. He was obliged to save the vestiges of industry from collapse; to stabilize an almost bankrupt financial system; to unify a people still very heterogeneous; and to inaugurate something like a decent program of social reform. All of us may well find the methods adopted by Fascism drastic and, in the nature of things, temporary. The fact remains, however,--and we must respect facts--that these methods accomplished a great deal after a regime of corrupt-ed democracy had accomplished nothing.²³

This editorial, in spite of anything said earlier, seems to present the Commonweal's most authoritative opinion on the development of Fascism, an authoritarian form of government in Italy.

²²Commonweal, V (May 4, 1927), 704.

²³Commonweal, VI (September 21, 1927), 457.

There is no doubt that this opinion of recognition of whatever good Fascism has done in Italy until September 1927, reflects the mind of a number of Americans. Perhaps the majority of American Catholics would have favored this view more than the view of the editor of the Catholic World. Whereas the Commonweal gives credit to Fascism for the stabilizing effect it had on the weakened condition in Italy, Father Gillis will not overlook the means used in the consolidation of the dictatorship to any ordered picture which Fascism could show the world in 1927. Mussolini's methods are violent. He is anti-democratic and forbids civil liberties; accordingly, in the mind of the editor of the Catholic World, his regime deserves no praise.

In 1928 the Commonweal continued with the same view when it said, after Mussolini had announced his decision to perpetuate Fascism, "One should remember that all the rigors engendered practically no brutality. . . . He has accomplished the remarkable feat of constructing a regime of might without really employing a great deal of it."²⁴ This remark one finds hard to justify, for even before the March on Rome Fascism was known for its brutality and violent methods, which were continued once Mussolini took over the country and used pragmatically whenever any need arose. However, later in 1929, when Mussolini took control over the Ministry of Colonies, thereby personally running

²⁴Commonweal, VII (May 2, 1928), 1369.

seven of the thirteen cabinet posts, in alarm the Commonweal said that such centralization of power might have peculiar benefits to Italy at this time, but the menace to the future stability of the country was increasing.²⁵

The attitude of America at this time is between that of the Commonweal and the Catholic World. While the other two magazines are concerned with anything the Pontiff says on the matter of Fascism, its nature and the relations between the Church and the State in Italy, it seems that America is even more concerned with upholding whatever the Pope says. Often enough, America will speak out on an issue only after the Pope has spoken, and defend his attitude. Accordingly, when the Pope, referring to certain abuses in Italy, condemned the concept of the state which, by absorbing and monopolizing everything, makes the state an end in itself, and the citizens mere means to that end, America made note of the Pope's condemnation and supported the Pontiff.²⁶

The Papal allocution of December 20, 1926 in which the Pope condemned that erroneous concept, is taken by many to be one of the first Papal condemnations of Fascism, and Father Gillis refers to it a number of times during the remainder of the Fascist experiment.

A summary of the position of America at this time shows that

²⁵Commonweal, IX (January 2, 1929), 246.

²⁶America, XXXVI (January 1, 1927), 275.

Mussolini, who knew much that was useful in statecraft, seemed ignorant of the fundamental truth that no nation could grow to its proper stature, if it were hindered by an excessive worship of the state. America then went on to say that Mussolini had done much good to Italy, for he abolished dishonest and incompetent officials, aided agriculture, manufacture, and the development of water power, and expelled atheism from the schools.²⁷ However, according to America, his motivating philosophy was wrong, for

It is not excessive to say that in every essential respect his philosophy is that of Hegel. . . . Ultimately, however, he asserts that the power which at the time controls the state is the source and sanction of all rights and duties. It is supreme. It can brook no other sovereignty, not even in the sphere of religion and morals.

Hence Mussolini 'permits' the state to teach religion in the schools, not because he admits the right of the Church so to teach, but because like Napoleon, he believes that in this manner the Church may be made a valuable part of the state police system. Should he decide that this teaching was inimical to what he conceived to be the interest of the state, he would be logical in recalling his permission. Mussolini appears to hold that the individual has no rights, in the strict sense, but only certain concessions granted by the state. The Church, on the contrary, teaches that every man has been endowed by his Creator with certain rights which, since they pertain to him by reason of his very nature, are termed natural rights. So too the Church possesses certain rights. . . . It is the proper office of every government formed among men to protect these rights.²⁸

Continuing in this same view, America said in November 1927, concerning Mussolini's proposal to abolish universal suffrage, that "Mussolini is beginning the great drive toward the establishment

²⁷America, XXXVII (July 30, 1927), 365.

²⁸Ibid., 365-6.

of what the philosophers term the best form of government--the benevolent despotism. Beyond all cavil, Grand Council-Mussolini government will be a despotism, but we seriously doubt Mussolini's possession of those qualities which, the philosophers teach, are necessary to insure the saving quality of benevolence. The Premier's concept of the purpose and function of government, condemned on more than one occasion by the Holy See, the sole voice in Italy which dares to criticize Mussolini, makes that supposition impossible."²⁹ This is a strong argument against Fascism by America; however, it will modify the force of this somewhat by its reaction during the next five years, in which time the Lateran treaties are signed between the Church and the Fascist government.

At the beginning of this chapter it was mentioned that there are three main areas in which these magazines reacted to Fascism in Italy from 1922 to 1933, the authoritarian nature of the regime, the Church-State problem, and foreign aspects. Up to this point, the authoritarian nature of the regime has been examined, however, by no means completely, for there is necessary overlapping in all three of these areas, especially between the Church-State relations and the nature and development of the regime. This is true since these magazines are mainly concerned with religious issues, and when the state comes into conflict with the

²⁹America, XXXVIII (November 26, 1927), 150.

Church, the magazines find reason for this, often enough, in the nature of the regime, because it rests on a theory incompatible with the Church.³⁰

Turning our attention more specifically to the relations between the Church and the State, it is seen that from 1926 until the end of this chapter in 1933 there are three main areas in which this problem manifested itself, first, the problem of the Catholic boy scouts until 1928, second, the settlement of the Roman Question in 1929, and third, the controversy over Catholic Action culminating in the summer of 1931 in the encyclical, Non Abbiamo Bisogno, which was a detailed refutation of the Fascist claim that Catholic Action was superfluous, and that it interfered in political matters.

Mention has already been made of the Papal allocution of December 20, 1926 and the note America took of it. One of the distinctive notes of the modern dictatorships is the complete monopoly of the training of youth which the government undertakes. This is the reason underlying the conflict over Catholic boy scouts who were superfluous and dangerous in the eyes of the Fascists. The Fascists had their own Balilla groups, but they not given official recognition by the State until April 3, 1926. These Fascist groups of youth, trained in the warlike spirit of the regular Fascist militia, almost necessarily had to come in

³⁰Binchy, p. 336.

conflict with the Catholic boy scouts who were a part of organized Catholic Action. In answer to the charge of political conspiracy on the part of the Catholic boy scouts, the Church repeatedly argued that the nature and purpose of the scouts were both religious in character. Nonetheless, the Balilla used violence against them. Processions were broken up, as were various meetings of the Catholic scouts.³¹ The Pope protested in the allocution of December 20, 1926.

The Commonweal ran a special editorial on this allocution, in which this magazine did not find much reason for worry, but rather took occasion to give an appraisal of the regime. The Commonweal said that when the Pope spoke on the subject of Mussolini, the interest was much increased for all concerned, but that what was said should be viewed calmly as a defense on the part of the Church, but not as a theoretical evaluation of Fascist theory as such. Differing from the Catholic World and America, the Commonweal insisted that the word condemnation was not the word to be used to describe the Pope's action. The Commonweal went on to say that as far as the theory and practice of Fascism were concerned, its pages were open to those who defended Fascism as well as to Don Luigi Sturzo, the arch-enemy of Fascism. However, if Mussolini's government were judged pragmatically on the basis of actual results, it would have to receive almost universal com-

³¹Ibid., 412.

mendation. If it were judged by other than pragmatic standards, its philosophy would be seen to be essentially negative and dangerous. Then the Commonweal made an often used distinction between Mussolini, who represents the moderate elements of the party, and those extremists who would seriously endanger the situation in Italy. The Commonweal hoped that, under Mussolini's personal guidance, this extreme element would subside, a hope that many made six years later when another dictator came to power, this time in Germany.³² This editorial just analysed reflects the favorable policy of the Commonweal to Fascism at this time, whereas the Catholic World simply referred to the allocution of the Pope as a condemnation of Fascism.³³

On January 27, 1927 the Holy Father formally dissolved part of the Catholic boy scouts, for if he did not do so the Fascist government would have done it anyhow.³⁴ The Pope was trying to avoid a crisis at that particular time. The Commonweal noted that, and added that the Church submitted in that instance, but that the Fascists should be careful not to arouse the Pope's anger any more.³⁵ Later, however, in April 1927 an agreement was

³²Commonweal, V (January 5, 1927), 231.

³³Catholic World, CXXV (May 1927), 257.

³⁴Binchy, p. 415.

³⁵Commonweal, V (February 2, 1927), 339.

reached which allowed Catholic Action to continue, but spelled the doom of the Catholic boy scouts.³⁶ The Commonweal commented that Mussolini's government in this instance could not be accused of animosity against the Papacy, for the Duce had no intention of ignoring the spiritual rights of Catholics in Italy.³⁷

Pius XI's decision to suppress the boy scouts in certain areas was revealed in a letter to Cardinal Gasparri, the Papal Secretary of State. Commenting on this letter America said that the real point of the letter was to be found in the Pope's condemnation of the principle that education is the monopoly of the state.³⁸ Referring to the decree of the Fascist government of January 9, 1927 by which the Catholic scouts in certain areas were to be suppressed, but which the Pope himself dissolved, America quoted the Pope's words saying, "The Balilla decree prescribes the teaching of a doctrine which we have reason to believe to be founded on, or to culminate in, a conception of government not conforming to the Catholic conception."³⁹ As usual, America will always speak out when the Pope has spoken.

By April 1928 the last vestiges of the Catholic scouts were gone. This aspect of the struggle between the Church and State

³⁶Binchy, p. 418.

³⁷Commonweal, V (April 13, 1927), 619.

³⁸America, XXXVI (February 5, 1927), 395.

³⁹Ibid., 396.

ended with Mussolini the winner, but he won only because the Pope thought a greater conflict would be averted, for it is to be remembered that during this time official negotiations were in progress to settle the long standing Roman Question. Also, one must recall that Catholic Action was saved for the present, a movement much more important than the Catholic boy scouts, who were only a small part of Catholic Action.

At the end of April America noted that the threatened conflict had been averted, and went on to say that Mussolini had done much for Italy which was worthy of the most enlightened statesmanship.⁴⁰ In the judgment of America, Mussolini was too clever a statesman to risk what he had won by fighting the Vatican. America implied its favor to the authoritarianism of the regime, and with the Commonweal, was willing to recognize the good of Fascism when they saw it, the question of civil liberty not concerning these magazines too much at this time. As was mentioned, the attitude of the Catholic World was to point out the Pope's allocution of December 1926 as a condemnation of Fascism. Usually, whenever the Pope and the Fascists reached any kind of agreement, the Catholic World would remain silent, but when a conflict would arise, Father Gillis would point out, and rightly so, that it was obviously latent all the time.

With the controversy over the Catholic boy scouts settled,

⁴⁰America, XXXIX (April 28, 1928), 53.

the official negotiations for the settlement of the Roman Question rapidly came to their fruition. These negotiations, begun unofficially in October 1926, had become official in December of the same year, and might have been completed in 1927, were it not for the trouble over the boy scouts. However, complete thoroughness was needed also, because of the peculiar problems involved, and as a result, the whole matter had to be studied carefully from every point of view.⁴¹

The Commonweal pointed out the central difficulty in this issue, namely that Italy, in her quest for unification, needed Rome and its tradition, while at the same time, the Holy See, the owner of the land, had to protest when it was forcefully taken away, and as a result, the Roman Question arose in 1870.⁴² Since the spiritual independence of the Papacy depended on territorial sovereignty, the protest on the part of the Holy See was absolutely necessary, if she was not to become a pawn in the hands of the anticlerical Italian government.⁴³ The Lateran Treaty settled the question of the territorial sovereignty by creating Vatican City, an independent sovereign state. There was also a Concordat between this newly established state of the Pope and the Italian government regulating such matters as marriage, appointment of

⁴¹Binchy, p. 175.

⁴²Commonweal, IX (February 20, 1929), 440.

⁴³Wilfrid Parsons, The Pope and Italy (1929), pp. 21-2.

bishops, education, and other religious affairs. In addition, there was a financial settlement to reimburse the Vatican for many of the buildings etc., which had been taken away from her since 1870.

Besides giving credit to the Holy Father and Cardinal Gasparri, the Commonweal went on to remark that Premier Mussolini had once again done excellent work by removing a cause of sad dissention, and accordingly winning many Catholics to his side.⁴⁴ The Catholic World did not mention the settlement on its editorial pages; America was most enthused over it.⁴⁵

However, the situation was not as pleasant as some philo-Fascists believed. There were many difficulties in this settlement, the Pope being aware of them, but because of what the Holy Father considered the greater good that would come by ending the fifty-nine year dissidio, he signed the agreements. The philosophy of Fascism demanded that there be no groups outside the pale of the state, yet by the Lateran Treaty, Catholic groups such as Catholic Action were recognized. This was the fact of the matter, even though considering Fascist theory alone, one would be led to foresee a conflict. What happened in the agreements of 1929 was that both Mussolini and the Pope repeated their principles for all to know, and then both agreed on a compromise in the

⁴⁴Commonweal, IX (February 20, 1929), 441.

⁴⁵America, XL (January 26, 1929), 374.

practical terms of the treaty, neither sacrificing his principles.

There was trouble even before the official ratification of the treaty by the Italian senate, a few months after its signing on February 11, 1929. Mussolini spoke to the Italian senate about the treaty, and what he thought it meant, and the Pope answered him in a letter to Cardinal Gasparri accusing Mussolini of "worse than heretical expressions."⁴⁶ Commenting on the speech of the Duce, the Commonweal said that he wanted to impress on everybody that he was not leaving Fascist principles, for he hoped that the treaty with the Church would serve his own interests, and not give exaggerated strength to the Church.⁴⁷ However, the Catholic World took up from the words of the Pope and went on to prove that the Pontiff was not a politician, since he dared to speak out in the above mentioned fashion only forty-eight hours before the official ratifications, proving that he was ready to sacrifice all the work that went into the treaty for what he thought needed to be said.⁴⁸ The Catholic World did not say a word in favor of Mussolini during this time. By his omissions Father Gillis made it clear that he still had no admiration for Fascism, Italian totalitarianism, even in the face of the ending of the long-standing Roman Question, an event which brought

⁴⁶Catholic World, CXXIX (July 1929), 483.

⁴⁷Commonweal, X (June 19, 1929), 170.

⁴⁸Catholic World, CXXIX (July 1929), 485.

world renown to Mussolini, and which ended a situation which was hindering the Church in carrying out her spiritual mission.

The trouble that was latent in the Church-State relations in Italy broke out in 1931 in the dispute over Catholic Action. Mention has already been made of the Catholic boy scouts which formed a part of Catholic Action. When in 1928 the scouts were dissolved completely, the rest of the structure of Catholic Action remained intact, as it had been set up in 1923 by Pius XI, who often said that he wanted to be remembered primarily as the Pope of Catholic Action.⁴⁹

The reason for the conflict, as Father Gillis knew, could be deduced from Papal and Fascist theory. According to the Fascists, there could be no group which was outside the state, while the Church claimed that Catholic Action, in its corporate capacity, formed a part of the Church, and therefore was beyond the state. Pius XI reconstructed Catholic Action in 1923 in order to avoid any difficulties with the state in this matter. He knew that the Popolari, Don Sturzo's political party, which was formed in 1919 by a fusion of two Catholic Action groups, would be the main source of friction for the Fascists, and so he made every attempt to dissociate any political importance from this reli-

⁴⁹ Giorgio Candeloro, Il Movimento Cattolico in Italia (Roma, 1953), p. 484; Binchy, p. 496.

gious work of Catholic Action.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, this movement was continually being ruthlessly accused of a political character, especially by Roberto Farinacci, the Secretary-General of the Fascist party.⁵¹

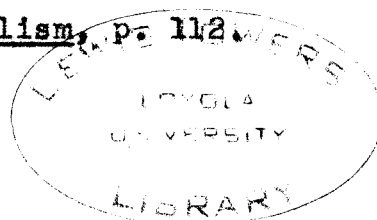
It was in the summer of 1931 that a definite, deliberate attack was made by the Fascists, who decided that the demands of their theory then should be declared and fulfilled.⁵² But they did not know the man they confronted, for Pius XI proved to the onlooking world that he was master of the situation. False accusations in the press, coupled with violence in breaking up processions and Catholic Action meetings, brought matters to a head at the end of May. To avoid a conflict the Pope told the Italian bishops to take over immediate control of the movement, thereby temporarily suspending all lay officers, for the Fascists charged that many of these lay officers were former members of the Popular party.⁵³ But on the same day the Pope did this, May 30th, a Fascist decree dissolved all branches of the Youth and University sections of Catholic Action, and seizure of all their files immediately followed. This led to open conflict between the Church and the State in Italy.

⁵⁰Sturzo, Nationalism and Internationalism, p. 112.

⁵¹Sturzo, Italy and Fascism, p. 207.

⁵²Binchy, p. 508.

⁵³Ibid., 517.



The Catholic World, which had spoken out in December 1930 and July 1931 quoting again the words of the Pope's allocution of December 20, 1926, sarcastically branded Mussolini in its editorial for August 1931:

Of course no one who has cut his wisdom teeth believes that the aggressor in this controversy is the Pope and the aggrieved party the dictator. It is hard to believe that the man with the flashing black eyes, the jutting jaw and the chronic angry expression is the lamb, while the scholarly gentleman, once librarian, now Pope, is the wolf of the legend. Mussolini, it will be remembered, is inept in the role of innocent victim. The world knows him as a sword-rattler and fire-eater. He has brandished his weapon in the direction of Yugoslavia, Greece, and France, and now naturally he glowers toward Vatican City. He has crushed the South Tyrol; he has tread on the toes and tweaked the nose of diplomats of even some of the really great powers. He has so often strutted and boasted like Goliath that the instinctive sympathy of peace-loving people is with the new David who has accepted his challenge.⁵⁴

Father Gillis speaks here very bluntly and typically about the conflict which for him was only naturally to be expected. In this same editorial he points out the fundamental Fascist error, namely that the citizen belongs strictly to the state, pure Hegelianism imported into Italy.⁵⁵

A few days after the suppression of the Catholic Action groups, switching from the David-Goliath analogy of the Catholic World, the Commonweal referred to Caesar's challenge of Peter, strongly supporting Peter. After pointing out that Mussolini

⁵⁴Catholic World, CXXXIII (August 1931), 611.

⁵⁵Ibid., 614.

could avoid the conflict if he would re-open the Catholic clubs after public order had been restored, the Commonweal said that this step would really only postpone the collision with the Church which the Fascist doctrine of the absolute state makes inevitable. If Mussolini kept the clubs closed, he would succeed as far as the exterior victory was concerned, because Fascism rested on material force and secular purposes. However, Peter, in the person of Pius XI, would remain undefeated because the spiritual must be superior to the material.⁵⁶ The Commonweal then went on to raise an important question, showing a penetrating insight into the modern world, "Can a spiritualized patriotism which does truly exist in all nations, but which is less well organized, less known and less effective than the militant chauvinistic forms of nationalism, hope to increase rapidly and effectively enough to avert that maelstrom of world war which even the most ferocious nationalistic leaders dread, but which their actions inevitably prepare? This is the supreme question now facing human society in the temporal sphere."⁵⁷ The editorial of June 10, 1931 shows how penetrating and brilliant the Commonweal can be. Father Gillis would agree with the tone of the whole editorial, and therefore of the importance of the question raised. But that "even the most ferocious nationalistic

⁵⁶ Commonweal, XIV (June 10, 1931), 141-2.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 142.

leaders dread" a world war, Father Gillis might not agree and he would not agree if, at that time, Hitler were already in power.

One week later the Commonweal called the whole situation mystifying since it was so hard to get news of just what was going on, or what the reasons for the rupture were. However, it pointed out some general causes such as difficulties over the scope of the Concordat, differences about the nature and purpose of education and the aims of Catholic Action, and finally the Commonweal hinted that the Fascist government might have been hurt by what the Pope said about Fascism in his encyclical Quadragesimo Anno, in which the Holy Father said that there were some who feared the substitution of the state for private initiative in Italy.⁵⁸

America distinguished between a question of fact and a question of right. The question of right was whether or not it pertained to the sphere of the state to enter the realm of the spiritual, and if this is what the controversy was about, then America and the Pope were resolutely opposed to Mussolini. On the other hand, as to the question of fact, whether or not any Catholics have hid in Catholic Action in order to oppose the government from this veiled position, America was not concerned except to say that this should not be done. America agreed here with the Commonweal that the great problem at stake was that of the

⁵⁸Commonweal, XIV (June 17, 1931), 170-1.

absolute state.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, a few weeks later America in an editorial on education in Italy praised Mussolini for bringing religion back to the schools of a Catholic people. America claimed that the transformation from the ruinous former educational system was extraordinary, so much so, that "the finger of God is plainly visible."⁶⁰ According to the Jesuit magazine the wonder was not that there were difficulties, some of them even serious, but the real marvel was that the conflicts had been so few. The expressions of Mussolini were not to be taken too literally, since Fascist theory of the absolute state was denied in practice by the existence of so many schools. In conclusion America too generously claimed, "Mussolini is no hothead, but a cool and calculating statesman whose work, in cooperation with the Holy See, has laid the foundation of a New Italy."⁶¹

There are two policies in evidence on this issue of Catholic Action. The Catholic World, as was to be expected, is opposed to Mussolini at every turn, while America and the Commonweal see good and bad in the situation, and often make generous statements in favor of Fascism. Father Gillis is resolutely and unhesitatingly averse to a dictatorial form of government in Italy, while the other two magazines are definitely not opposed to a strong

⁵⁹America, XLV (June 13, 1931), 221.

⁶⁰America, XLV (July 4, 1931), 295.

⁶¹Ibid.

authoritarian rule.

Events reached a high point by late June, and the Pope decided to use his trump card by issuing the encyclical Non Abbiamo Bisogno, which was a detailed refutation of the Fascist action in this issue.⁶² In this clear condemnation of the atrocities committed by the Fascists in the previous few months, the Pontiff denied categorically that Catholic Action was a vehicle for political activity.⁶³ Rather, the Pope said the real issue was the attempt to obtain complete monopoly over the young, taking them away from the Church.⁶⁴ The strongest words of the document leave no doubt of the seriousness of the Pope, "And here We find Ourselves in the presence of a contrast between authentic affirmations on the one hand and not less authentic facts on the other hand, which reveal, without the slightest possibility of doubt, the proposal, already in great part actually put into effect, to monopolize completely the young, from the tenderest years up to manhood and womanhood, and all for the exclusive advantage of a party, of a regime based on ideology which clearly resolves itself into a true and real pagan worship of the state, which is no less in contrast with the natural rights of the family than it is

⁶²Candeloro, p. 512. (dated June 29, 1931)

⁶³Pope Pius XI, Non Abbiamo Bisogno, ed. National Catholic Welfare Conference, (Washington, 1931), p. 15.

⁶⁴Ibid., 19.

in contradiction to the supernatural rights of the Church."⁶⁵

After the Pope had spoken in such forthright terms, the Commonweal backed up the Holy See, quoting the part of the encyclical with regard to the attempt to monopolize the youth by a government based on a pagan worship of the state.⁶⁶ After the encyclical the extreme part of the Fascist press broke out into a fury of rage against the Church. Commenting on this, America said that there was still time for the Fascists to retract their extreme statements and actions, for it hoped that the moderate element of the Fascist party would restrain the radicals so that the party would not defend a pagan form of government in a Catholic country.⁶⁷ One month later Father Paul Blakely, S.J., a member of the staff of America, stated that there was no essential incompatibility between Fascism and the Church, and that the Pope had only condemned a part of the Fascist program in Non Abbiamo Bisogno. Further in this article Father Blakely said that Father Parsons, the Editor-in-Chief of America, was of the opinion that the Fascist revolution was never intended to be anything else than founded on Catholic tradition, an opinion which Father Blakely seemed to share.⁶⁸ Although this last idea is not found

⁶⁵ Ibid., 21-2.

⁶⁶ Commonweal, XIV (July 15, 1931), 271-2.

⁶⁷ America, XLV (July 25, 1931), 365.

⁶⁸ Paul Blakely, "The Church and the Fascist Party," America, XLV (August 22, 1931), 472-3.

on the official editorial pages of the magazine, nonetheless, it is felt that it would be beneficial to point it out since it involves two of the editors.

All three of the magazines claim to be and are supporters of the Pope, but in view of their opinions quoted thus far it seems that there are different ways of interpreting some of the things which Pius XI said. At this point it seems that there are three strains of policy, the first being that of the Holy Father, who holds a center course, the second, that of Father Gillis, which is to the left of the Pontiff in that he is saying more than the Pope, for there is no hint of praise for the regime, and third, that of America and the Commonweal, which is to the right in that there is more praise for the regime than the Pope would give. On this serious issue of the relations between Church and State it was worse to understate the Pope's view than to overstate it, for Mussolini's policy toward the Church was in reality based solely on expediency.

After a number of meetings in which the Jesuit, Father Peter Tacchi-Venturi played a very important part in mediating between Mussolini and the Pope, a settlement was reached in early September by which Catholic Action became strictly diocesan in organization rather than national, in order that it be clear that its nature was religious not political.⁶⁹ The agreement met with ap-

⁶⁹Binchy, p. 528.

proval by both sides of the press in Italy, showing that a complete break was not wanted by either side. However, the Pope was the winner, for the very existence of Catholic Action was at stake in the face of varied Fascist attacks. It was true, nevertheless, that the effectiveness of the organized movement was hampered by the lessening of centralization. Yet the uncompromising attitude of the Pope with regard to the essentials of this question deserves the note of victory.

America noted that Mussolini would not have signed the Treaty of 1929 if he intended to fight the Pope on these matters. The Italian government, continued America, was far from the practical atheism of the secular state in signing the treaty two years earlier, and now it was apparent that the government, which should be thankful to the Pope for pointing out to it the course away from ruin, would now return to its earlier Christian spirit.⁷⁰ This last opinion of America, while well meaning, shows that that magazine did not think Mussolini was dangerous to the interests of the Church now that the difficulty over Catholic Action had been alleviated. But really Mussolini was dangerous to the interests of the Church, for he was aware of what was going on with regard to the breaking up of processions and meetings, allowing Farinacci a free hand in his bitterly anti-Catholic campaign. The Commonweal remarked that the Church was now really

⁷⁰America, XLV (September 5, 1931), 511.

out of Italian politics, more so than out of American politics.⁷¹ But on the other hand, as usual, the Catholic World remained silent whenever an agreement was reached between the Church and the Fascists.

Thus the end of the controversy was reached. It was a conflict which for a while many thought would develop into a complete break between the two parties. However, after the tempers cooled, the agreement was reached, the Pope compromising on a non-essential by changing Catholic Action from a national into a diocesan organization. But the principle that the Italian government alone possessed the right to educate, was abandoned by the Fascists, for the Pope simply could not compromise on this point. The whole episode was never forgotten by the Pope even though, on the surface, it seemed that all was healed.

Before the foreign aspects of the regime until 1933 are treated, it would be well to generalize on the attitude of the magazines to the nature of the regime and the closely connected relations between the Church and the State, both of which have been treated until 1933. The important issue is the nature of the government in Italy. Is it authoritarian or totalitarian? Since the Catholic World considers Mussolini's regime to be the latter Father Gillis will not have anything to do with the government. On the other hand, the other two magazines more or less

⁷¹Commonweal, XIV (September 16, 1931), 453.

agree in as much as they both look on the Fascist government as authoritarian having met definite practical needs of the Italian people. The eyes of the Catholic World are on the means used, not the end attained, on the use of violence and lack of political liberty, not on the order achieved. Father Gillis is also very correctly worried about the future stability of Europe in view of the glorification of war by Mussolini. The other two magazines are not as concerned about violence in the means as is the Catholic World, which sees in the violence the totalitarian state.

From another point of view, the matter can be treated by analysing the attitude of the magazines towards Mussolini, who as a dictator in Italy, had more power than any other ruler in Europe in 1930. Father Gillis is aware that the Duce represents the extreme element of the Fascists, inasmuch as Mussolini could control at will the extreme elements, while America and the Commonweal would consider him as representing the moderate element, and bearing the marks of a true statesman. It was difficult to say exactly how Mussolini would finish his career. Had he not come under the influence of Hitler, possibly the end of Fascism would not have been so inglorious. Nonetheless, there should have been more adverse criticism of the regime, since its excesses were a major factor in precipitating the Second World War. While Father Gillis may have been excessive himself in his denunciation of the regime, nevertheless his basic attitude was the one which should have been taken.

Turning to Italy and her relations with the other countries of Europe concerning the momentous issue of security in a world moving through a crisis set up at the end of the First World War, we see that the magazines again are not in complete agreement. The underlying concern of Europe in the twenties was security. Especially was this true of France, but nevertheless, the people of Italy were acutely aware of what war and peace meant.

At the end of 1926 during the so-called tranquil era of Locarno, the Commonweal made the flattering statement, "Mussolini has undoubtedly succeeded in fulfilling one aim of the modern Italian foreign policy--an aim which, one may safely say, is not belligerent or even imperialistic in the strict sense, but political in so far as it means the firm establishment of Italy as one of the greatest European powers."⁷² However, earlier in that same year, after mentioning Mussolini's tyranny in the Tyrol, the Catholic World predicted that the regime in Italy would end in something similar to disaster.⁷³

Two years later, the Catholic World, even after Mussolini had signed the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact of 1928, was still in this frame of mind, when it said that Mussolini would not join in a plan to do away with warfare, since the dictator was so concerned with his likeness to Caesar and Napoleon, who were not

⁷²Commonweal, V (December 8, 1926), 117.

⁷³Catholic World, CXXII (March 1926), 840.

models one takes if he desires peace.⁷⁴ Two years later the Catholic World endorsed the idea that only in Italy of all the countries of Europe, peace was not heard of, but rather all that was heard of was the aim of the Fascist government to indoctrinate the people with militarism.⁷⁵ This was all the Catholic World had to say on this matter, America having no comment at all on the issue of war and peace at this time.

On the other hand, the Commonweal did speak out, but did so in a wavering fashion, giving the impression that Italy was now for war and now for peace. Toward the end of 1930 it said that the country was an armed camp which was continually kept in a state of excitement.⁷⁶ However, a few weeks later after Mussolini had made a speech about his peaceful intentions the Commonweal seems to have taken him literally when he said that neither he nor the Italian government wanted to bring about war, for the discoveries of modern science would make it certain that another war would be more dreadful than the last. According to the Commonweal Mussolini was sincere in saying that the training of Italian youth was only aimed at making them strong and self-reliant for the sake of discipline and responsibility.⁷⁷ One week

⁷⁴Catholic World, CXXVIII (November 1928), 234.

⁷⁵Catholic World, CXXXI (September 1930), 745-6.

⁷⁶Commonweal, XIII (December 17, 1930), 170.

⁷⁷Commonweal, XIII (January 14, 1931), 283.

later it again favorably commented on the peaceful intentions of Fascism which was only mobilizing for the defense of the country against the possibility of invasion.⁷⁸ Throughout the year 1933 there was much talk of war, more than in any previous year for a number of years. The Commonweal showed its concern over the European situation, and hoped that the countries would iron out their difficulties. The Four Power Pact, proposed by Mussolini, was a gesture in his favor in the eyes of the Commonweal which reiterated its opinion that the Duce did not want war.⁷⁹

Thus the first half of our study is completed with the reaction of the periodicals up to and including the year 1933. Three aspects have been the main concern, the nature of the regime, the Church-State problem, and the foreign policy aspects of the country. In this period, from the inception of Fascism in 1922 until 1933, the relation of the Church to the Italian government has been the dominant area in which the magazines reacted. This was to be expected, since all the periodicals are Catholic, inclined to look at the modern world from that point of view.

⁷⁸Commonweal, XIII (January 21, 1931), 311.

⁷⁹Commonweal, XVIII (July 28, 1933), 317.

CHAPTER III

PERIODICAL REACTION 1934-1943

In the second half of our study it will be seen that the reaction of a part of the American Catholic press in respect to Italian Fascism will center largely around the various incidents which led to the Second World War. From 1934, after the rise of Hitler to power in Germany, the history of Europe was nothing but one crisis after another, until the actual start of the war in September 1939. This feeling of crisis was reflected in all the periodicals under discussion.

The trend of all three is varying mistrust of Fascism. After the Ethiopian adventure, which none of them justified, the shallowness of the regime became more and more apparent until Mussolini came under the domination of Hitler in the latter thirties. There is nothing glorious about the history of Italy after Ethiopia until the Second World War; rather the weakness of the regime manifested itself as the Italian people slowly realized that a war which they did not want was in the making.

As in the previous chapter, the reaction of the periodicals will be thoroughly treated in respect to the various topics of importance during these years. The main topics of periodical

reaction in this chapter are the reaction to the Ethiopian conquest, to a comparison of Fascism with Communism, to the Italian racial policy of 1938, to the approach of the world war, to Italy's entrance into the war, and to the fall of Mussolini and with him Fascism.

By the Lateran Treaty of 1929 the Church-State problem was fundamentally settled in the previous chapter. Despite the differences between the Church and the State in Fascist Italy since the year 1929, collaboration was more frequent than dispute. The ever latent contradiction of the settlement will appear in this chapter with regard to the Fascist imitation of racism in Germany. This uneasiness might have exploded on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Lateran pacts, if Pope Pius XI, whose patience with Mussolini was at an end, had not died a few days before on the ninth of February, for he had prepared a speech for the Italian bishops which all reports say was to be a condemnation of the Fascist violations of the Concordat.¹

With Pius XII as Pope, everything possible was done to heal the breach in the hope of keeping Italy out of the war. However Mussolini, against the wishes of the Pope and the Italian people, allied his country with what he thought would be the victorious side. After that Fascism quickly disintegrated; Mussolini fell from power in 1943 and was killed in 1945. In contrast therefore

¹Binchy, p. 631.

to the first half of the study the present chapter will be concerned with the external aspects of Fascism, its relation with the other countries of Europe.

The reaction of the magazines to Fascism during 1934 and 1935 until the invasion of Ethiopia by Italian troops is slight. The Catholic World had nothing to say. During this time, however, the Commonweal made a number of somewhat hostile references to Fascism on various topics, saying that the advent of Fascism in October 1922 was largely due to financial corruption prevalent among the members of parliament.² In addition, it mentioned the fact that the press of Italy was in the hands of a dictatorial government,³ and that Mussolini should look upon himself as one who takes away civil rights.⁴ It seems from these remarks that the Commonweal has been able to perceive more deeply the essence of Fascism, a mild form of totalitarianism; America was silent during this period.

The only magazine to comment on the establishment of twenty-two corporations in October 1934, a major step in the formation of the Italian Corporate State, was the Commonweal which said that, while it might be difficult to analyse all the various laws that surrounded the establishment of the Italian Corporate State,

²Commonweal, XIX (February 16, 1934), 422.

³Commonweal, XX (July 13, 1934), 275.

⁴Commonweal, XIX (March 30, 1934), 591.

nevertheless, the determining force behind all decisions was a council composed of four members of the Fascist party headed by Mussolini himself. Consequently, the establishing of the twenty-two corporations was a part of the incorporation of everything into the totalitarian state. This was why the Italian Corporate State differed from the ideal of the state set forth by Pius XI in the encyclical Quadragesimo Anno of 1931, for the Papal letter subjected conflicts in the area of economics to a judicial law which was based on the natural law, not ultimately to a dictator.⁵

From these scattered items it is now necessary to turn to the attitude of these magazines to the Italian seizure of Ethiopia which was planned from 1933.⁶ The specific cause which started the machinery of aggression was the Walwal border incident between Italy's African possessions and Ethiopia in December 1934. This gave rise to a dispute between Italy and Ethiopia in the League of Nations. On October 3rd of the following year, Italy, taking matters into her own hands, invaded Ethiopia. By May 1936 the capital, Addis Ababa, fell to the Italians and Victor Emmanuel III became the King and Emperor of the country.

From the beginning of 1935 until the actual invasion late in that same year, the eyes of Europe and the United States were on

⁵Commonweal, XXI (November 23, 1934), 105.

⁶Albrecht-Carrié, Italy from Napoleon to Mussolini, p. 244.

the ambition of Mussolini, for not only was the sovereignty of a country at stake, but there was widespread fear of a general war in Europe because of Italy's expansion. Italy's two main arguments were the need for expansion on account of her overpopulation, and her claim to defend her frontiers in Africa against Ethiopian aggression. But the twentieth century was not the century for imperialism as was the nineteenth, for popular opinion was too strong in those countries whose era of expansion was over.

Turning particularly to the periodical reaction, the Commonweal said of Italian mobilization, "After all the drilling and the invoking of the folly of military grandeur, there seems to be no way out but to go somewhere and start shooting at targets more substantial than cardboard ones."⁷ In a similar vein the same magazine later said, "The Italian government of yore disturbed no one. When Mussolini appeared, action became the watchword. All Italy was rushed into uniforms for much the same reason that a whole college is hurried into football suits. When times became very hard and life was boring, the chance to gobble up Abyssinia presented itself."⁸ The idea behind these remarks is the almost necessary direction of Fascism, a form of government based on action, into war. One month before the actual attack on Ethiopia, the Commonweal said that the action of Mussolini in this

⁷Commonweal, XXII (July 26, 1935), 315.

⁸Commonweal, XXII (September 27, 1935), 511.

regard was essentially a matter of attacking the independence of a sovereign state.⁹ However, the Commonweal, evidently opposed to the attack, qualified its opposition in a slight way when it said, one week earlier, that Italy might have had a greater reason for her aggression than had yet become available.¹⁰

It became evident that Mussolini was going to attack in Africa regardless of the outcome of any discussion of a settlement in the League of Nations. The invasion started on October the third, and as a result, the moral issue involved was of much concern to the magazines. America, which had previously said that Ethiopia should be left free from spheres of influence,¹¹ spoke out in defense of the Pope against those who charged that the Pontiff by his silence was defending Mussolini in his imperialism. America continued by saying that the Pope had spoken out and that he condemned a purely aggressive war. The Pope did not think that Italy's defense of her African border, or her overpopulation were sufficient reasons for war; rather the Pontiff prayed for peace.¹² Because of the possibility of confusion arising from his words the Pope said next to nothing during the course of the Ethiopian War. When he did speak, he spoke only of

⁹Commonweal, XXII (September 6, 1935), 435.

¹⁰Commonweal, XXII (August 30, 1935), 414.

¹¹America, LII (February 16, 1935), 440.

¹²America, LIII (September 7, 1935), 506.

peace. While it is true that he did bless individuals who were going to the war he never blessed any official mobilized group. There was one instance, however, in a speech the Pope made to the promoters of the world exhibition of the Catholic press, on May the twelfth, after the war was over, which could give rise to a philo-Fascist interpretation, for the Pope spoke of the "triumphant joy of an entire great and good people."¹³ Even here it could be argued that the Pope was speaking as an Italian, not in his capacity as Pope.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the remark was unfortunate; it had harmful repercussions, for the Fascists claimed that their African aggression was thereby justified, while part of the non-Catholic world claimed that there was a Catholic-Fascist alliance.¹⁵

In a blistering editorial on the ambition of Mussolini, the editor of the Catholic World asked whether Mussolini realized that he might start an international war, with all of Europe involved. The Italian people, who were not allowed to learn world opinion, could not be blamed for the war. At this point Father Gillis raised a very important question when he asked whether a Catholic ethics, which was colored by nationalism, could still remain Catholic, since to his mind Italian theologians should

¹³Pope Pius XI, as quoted in Binchy, p. 648.

¹⁴Binchy, p. 650.

¹⁵Ibid., 649, 702.

condemn the butchery of Ethiopia. If these theologians have left it for the Pope to speak, why did they not heed his words, for the Pope has said that a war of conquest was unjustified?¹⁶

The Commonweal took up the question of Father Gillis saying that he raised a difficult and dangerous question. One can answer theoretically when a war is just and when it is unjust said the Commonweal, but in any given instance it is extremely difficult to say. In this conflict between national aspirations and the Christian ethical code, the Commonweal placed the root of the difficulty of definitively saying whether a war is just or unjust, in the inability of the human mind to see the whole situation objectively, when the strong element of national sentiment is involved. Even so, the question of Father Gillis is supremely important, the world as a whole being unable to understand why Christian leaders do not follow the Pope in this matter.¹⁷

Although Italy went ahead in the exploitation of Ethiopia with little opposition from the backward natives of the area, the fear of all three of the magazines that a general European war might be the outcome was not realized. Really Mussolini did not want a world war to result from his expansion, nor did he think that any country would make this as a real threat to him, although he was determined to fight for Ethiopia no matter what

¹⁶Catholic World, CXLII (October 1935), 1-9.

¹⁷Commonweal, XXIII (November 8, 1935), 31.

England or France did. These two countries, who determined the policy of the League of Nations, came under the fire of public opinion for their moral cowardice in this matter in that they did not provide for effective sanctions against Italy. Especially was this true of England. Comparing them with the Italians, Father Gillis said, "Let the Italians simply say: We wanted some land in Africa. We looked around to see where we could get it most easily. Ethiopia was the only country not protected by a great European power. So we picked on Ethiopia, we went in and took it. What we have we hold. That's all. We avoid the pretense of high moral and religious purpose such as the Anglo-Saxons use. We are land grabbers, but we are not liars."¹⁸

The Commonweal indicated that England made a huge error in not providing effective economic sanctions against Italy, for that country could have been stopped and the League of Nations would have still possessed some power, but since Italy has not been stopped, the League of Nations has become unimportant, and the sovereignty of a country has been lost.¹⁹

As the war with Ethiopia was coming to a close, the editor of the Catholic World again deplored Italy's aggression, claiming that it was the end of chivalry, and offering as his evidence, "the cold-blooded, ruthless, and incredibly cruel slaughter of

¹⁸Catholic World, CXLIII (June 1936), 263.

¹⁹Commonweal, XXIV (July 17, 1936), 295.

the Ethiopians by the Italians."²⁰ As a final verdict on the African episode, Father Gillis asked, "How shall anyone excuse this modern Caesar, who entered Ethiopia in spite of the public opinion of the world, a traitor to his sworn obligations as a member of the League and a signatory to Locarno, who wages war fully in defiance of Christian ethics, and yet in the Christian name and under Christian insignia?"²¹

The attitudes of the magazines were in substantial agreement over the action of the Fascist state in Africa, and continued to be so. The greatest difference between them appeared in the previous chapter. All three now recognize Fascism as not merely authoritarian, but as a concrete expression of the totalitarian state.

In July 1936, shortly after the end of Italy's conquest of Ethiopia, the Spanish Civil War broke out, in which Mussolini and Hitler aided Franco in his fight with the republican government. The issues behind this war are extremely complex and still debated; suffice it to say that the words communism, fascism, and democracy were constantly used in describing Spain and Europe in the late thirties.²² Also, the relation of the Catholic Church

²⁰Catholic World, CXLIII (May 1936), 137.

²¹Ibid., 138.

²²Although Fascism in the next few pages at times might refer to Hitler's Germany or Franco's Spain, no violence is done to the comparison of Communism with Italian Fascism, one form of Fascism.

to Fascism and Communism was debated; the magazines gave considerable space to an explanation of the relation of the Church to Fascism and Communism, which is of importance for the Church was accused of favoring Fascism in Italy, Spain, and elsewhere.

According to the Commonweal, both Fascism and Communism are tyranny.²³ As for the fundamental underlying principle of Italian Fascism, namely a state based on nationalistic absolutism wholly superior to any other human organism within that state so that the state is superior to the family, the Church, and human dignities and liberties, the Church condemns Fascism; but if the Church has been able to tolerate Fascism, it is only because this ruthless system has not enforced the ultimates of its totalitarian theory.²⁴ Against the accusation that the Church condemns Communism principally because of ecclesiastical concern for the aid of Fascism, the Commonweal said that the issue was not between Communism and Fascism, but rather between democracy and totalitarianism which included both Communism and Fascism. Accordingly, it denied that the essential division in the world was between the Fascist dictatorships and the democracies as the Communist Internationalist and some American Protestants claimed.²⁵ The Commonweal repeated this almost two years later, when it said

²³Commonweal, XXIII (February 7, 1936), 396.

²⁴Commonweal, XXIV (October 9, 1936), 542.

²⁵Commonweal, XXV (January 1, 1937), 257-9.

that one of the most perplexing and difficult situations that the Church ever had to cope with arose over the rise of Communism and its counterpart Fascism, for both of these ideologies were evil, and therefore the Catholic Church opposed them equally. The struggle between Communism, Fascism, and the Church was not one of those three-sided struggles which would resolve into a two-sided fight in which one of the participants chose the lesser of the two evils. The Church did not favor Fascism because it was a lesser evil than Communism.²⁶

With regard to this issue, the Catholic World also equated Communism and Fascism. However, Father Gillis might have gone too far when he said, "Speaking my own mind, I should say that totalitarianism in alliance with Catholicism is more dangerous than in opposition to Catholicism. After a lapse of another generation or a century, I think it will be evident that we shall have suffered more from the friendship of Fascism than from the enmity of Communism."²⁷ Father Gillis again mentioned Pius XI's allocution of December 1926 condemning Fascism, and also the fact that Alfredo Rocco's statement of Fascist theory could not be reconciled with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical on the Christian constitution of the state, or with Cardinal Bellermino's political writings. He went on to say that the Concordat of 1929 was only

²⁶Commonweal, XXIX (November 4, 1938), 29.

²⁷Catholic World, CXLIII (September 1936), 646. However, for a denial of this see Catholic World, CLX (October 1944), 1.

a modus vivendi with Fascism similar to the Concordat of Pius VII in 1801 with Napoleon.²⁸

Turning our attention now to America, we see that its policy is also defense of the Pope. That Pius XI, the one voice in the world which is raised for peace, charity, and man's God given liberties,²⁹ is partial to Fascism is not true for:

The Catholic Church favors no specified form of government over any other form. She is at home with every form of government, as long as it protects the rights of God and of the Church, as well as the Divine, natural, and civic rights of the individual. It is stressing the obvious to insist that a form of government which may suit one people admirably, may be wholly unacceptable to another nation. The Church never interferes with the choice of the people, but she condemns every alleged 'government' which is based upon a violation of Divine and human rights.

That Fascism, properly understood, violates these rights is beyond question. That is why Pius XI condemned it in an allocution to the College of Cardinals in 1926. But it is also true that frequently the Church is obliged to tolerate for a time the lesser of two evils. This does not mean that she approves the evil; on the contrary, she condemns all that is unjust. With Fascism, it is possible for her to establish a temporary modus vivendi and to wait for better times. But with Communism, essentially based on atheism and committed to the fostering of atheism, no such arrangement is possible.³⁰

In its distinction between Communism and Fascism, America said that though both of them might have come from hell, "Communism fumes from a lower part of hell,"³¹ for Fascism would permit a certain amount of freedom of religion, but Communism would not.

²⁸Catholic World, CXLIII (September 1936), 646.

²⁹America, LIX (October 1, 1938), 612.

³⁰America, LVIII (January 15, 1938), 348-9.

³¹America, LX (October 8, 1938), 13.

Accordingly, a concordat with a Fascist state was possible.³²

Thus all three of the magazines have forcefully expressed themselves on the relation of Fascism, Communism, and the Church. Significantly, all three are in agreement.

Before discussing the events which directly led to the outbreak of the Second World War, the attitude of the magazines towards racism, as it appeared in a mild form in Fascist Italy, will be reviewed. In a total population of more than forty-two million, there were more than fifty thousand Jews in Italy by the year 1938, if one includes those Jews who sought refuge from Germany.³³ The Jews were treated very well in Italy in the early thirties, some of them holding high Fascist positions. But the demands of the Rome-Berlin axis seem to have led Mussolini into his policy of racial discrimination. Since Hitler visited Rome in May 1938, and in July a Fascist report on racial problems was issued, culminating in a Decree-Law on November 10, 1938 forbidding Italian citizens to marry persons of another race,³⁴ during the summer and fall of 1938 the press was concerned with this issue.

The Commonweal was the first to speak out saying that the question of race was an important reason why Italian Fascism was

³²Ibid.

³³Binchy says that in the Italian census of 1931, there were 47, 485 Jews out of a total population of 41, 709, 851, p. 570

³⁴Binchy, p. 628.

better than German Nazism, but that an unofficial report had been issued in Italy directed against the Jews, and against it the Pope immediately had spoken out.³⁵ One week later, the Commonweal was aware that the racial policy was official.³⁶ It quoted the Pope that mankind is a single human race, and that exaggerated nationalism was the reason underlying the persecution of the Jews.³⁷ It also noted that the conflict between the Vatican and the Italian government over racism ought to be a clue to those who think that Catholicism and totalitarianism can harmoniously co-exist.³⁸

America, noting that the Pope condemned racism on a number of occasions, also quoted the Pope that racism was not merely a political issue as the Fascists tried to maintain, because exaggerated nationalism leads to a moral issue.³⁹

The Catholic World reacted violently to racism in Italy. Father Gillis argued that the Pope condemned racism three times, but that, sad to say, the people of Italy were not aware of it because of the Italian press. He went on to say that even in the

³⁵Commonweal, XXVIII (July 29, 1938), 360.

³⁶Commonweal, XXVIII (August 5, 1938), 378.

³⁷Commonweal, XXVIII (August 12, 1938), 399; (September 23, 1938), 542.

³⁸Commonweal, XXVIII (August 12, 1938), 400.

³⁹America, LIX (August 6, 1938), 420; (August 13, 1938), 434; (September 10, 1938), 530.

United States some people only heard the opinion of the Pope from the secular press, hinting that part of the American Catholic press was philo-Fascist.⁴⁰ One month later the editor of the Catholic World said that what was going on in Italy was a real persecution in which Mussolini was imitating Hitler, and he wondered how the Catholic admirers of Mussolini could explain it.⁴¹ Then after pointing out that the Catholic, conservative London Tablet was pro-Fascist, he repeated some of his familiar ideas with regard to Fascism, saying, "This is as good a place as any to explain that I personally oppose the Italian dictator because I think he is using the Catholic religion and the Catholic Church as a 'front' to conceal the essential atheism and materialism of dictatorial tyranny. There is, I am convinced, an essential antagonism between Catholicism and Fascism, just as there is between Catholicism and Nazism, Catholicism and Communism. To me they are all phases of Hegelianism, and Hegelianism I take to be the greatest evil of the day. . . . As for those of my brethren of the Catholic press who see clearly the danger of Communism, I wonder why they have so little worry over Fascism or Nazism."⁴²

Again the three magazines are in agreement, in this instance with regard to racism in Italy. Certainly this was not an issue

⁴⁰ Catholic World, CXLVII (September 1938), 644-7.

⁴¹ Catholic World, CXLVIII (October 1938), 4-7.

⁴² Ibid., 3.

to which a Catholic should be indifferent, for the Pope made it known that it was a spiritual issue, not only political. As a result, even the Italian hierarchy including Cardinal Schuster of Milan, a professed Fascist sympathizer, attacked racism.⁴³

The crisis in Europe only increased. The year 1937 was relatively quiet except for the Spanish Civil War which continued during that year and the next. However, during 1938 Hitler annexed Austria and part of Czechoslovakia in his determined policy of expansion. Meanwhile, Italy, linked with Germany by the Rome-Berlin pact of October 1936, failed to reach any agreement, permanent or substantial, with England or France, who wanted to win Italian friendship in order to balance the power against Hitler. England in November 1938 finally agreed to recognize the Italian empire in Africa, but it was too late for these two countries to cooperate effectively since by that time Italy was too strongly wedded to Germany.⁴⁴ Whether there would be a war was the question of supreme interest and importance. When the policy of appeasement on the part of the democracies no longer offered any hope of stopping Hitler short of overrunning Europe the decision

⁴³Binchy, p. 624. It is necessary to distinguish between the Vatican and the Italian hierarchy. Naturally the Italian hierarchy would be more sympathetic to Fascism, the established government in Italy, than would be the Vatican, whose view is necessarily international.

⁴⁴Luigi Villari, Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini, (New York, 1956), p. 195.

to fight was made over Poland's freedom.

In the reaction of the Catholic World to Fascism in the last few years before the outbreak of the war, Father Gillis' unswerving policy of hostility continued. He thought that the Italian people, whom he had been accused of hating because of his attitude to Fascism, did not want a war.⁴⁵ Rather, it was the rulers of Italy who wanted war. Speaking of the Italian people, he said, "Italy was for centuries a land in which the intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual genius of man flourished as in no other country in the world. Of late the Italian genius has been directed away from literature, music, art and the other graces of civilization, and turned to war-mongering, and war-making, to tyranny and race prejudice, to cruelty and injustice at the nod and beck of a great bully."⁴⁶ Father Gillis often refuted the charge that because he criticized Mussolini, he therefore was anti-Italian;⁴⁷ rather, he claimed that he had never written so devastating a condemnation of Mussolini or Fascism as Pope Pius XI did in the encyclical Non Abbiamo Bisogno of 1931.⁴⁸

Taking up the question of the reaction of the contemporary

⁴⁵ Catholic World, CXLIV (February 1937), 576.

⁴⁶ Catholic World, CXLVIII (January 1939), 394.

⁴⁷ Catholic World, CXLIII (July 1936), 385-6; CXLIV (March 1937), 645-6.

⁴⁸ Catholic World, CXLVIII (January 1939), 389-90.

press to Fascism, Father Gillis was very much aware that he had been alone in his outspoken criticism of Fascism from its earliest days.⁴⁹ This is very important to remember for the purpose of this study is to make known and criticize the reaction of the periodicals chosen. There can be no doubt that in this investigation the policy of the Catholic World was unique in its continual opposition of Fascism in Italy. The deeper question, as to whether and to what extent the Catholic Church abetted the purposes of various totalitarian states, is involved here. Even anterior to that is the question of the relation of the Catholic to the totalitarian mentality. However, it is only the purpose of this study to investigate a small part of the Catholic mind, as it is reflected in the editorials of the three magazines under discussion, and as far as the Catholic World is concerned, its reaction was entirely opposed to Fascism, so much so, that it is one of the very few Catholic periodicals to have reacted consistently and violently to Italian totalitarianism, and as a result, future historians may rank its editor as a hero of the age.

Consequently, it was of real concern to Father Gillis that so much of the Catholic press was, at least to some degree, sympathetic to Fascism. He thought that most of the contemporary Catholic press was so concerned with Communism that, as a result, it was not able to penetrate to the danger of Fascism. The Cath-

⁴⁹Catholic World, CIL (April 1939), 1.

olic press editorialized against Lenin and Stalin, and even Hitler, but not enough against Mussolini who, because he visibly aided religion, was allowed by some pious Catholics to escape the criticism due him for the unjustified Ethiopian War among other things.

This attitude was especially seen in certain conservative English Catholic periodicals, such as the weekly London Tablet. That review rejoiced in all the benefits which the Catholics of Italy had received from the newly formed Fascist government, but the editor of that magazine was not able to see what Pius XI saw, that the Fascist conception of the state was not consistent with the Catholic concept because, for the Fascists the state becomes the only end, every other association within the state becoming merely a means. Here again Father Gillis referred to the Papal allocution of December 1926. Some Catholic admirers and editors simply have not accepted the Pope's words for what they were meant to say. In this regard the encyclical, Non Abbiamo Bisogno was the model.

The editor of the Catholic World offered another example of philo-Fascism when he quoted from Douglas Jerrold's book, The Future of Freedom, in which the author of that book said that the position of Catholics with respect to the practice of their religion was more advantageous in Italy than in England. Father Gillis flatly rejected this, citing as proof the existence of Italian secret police and German agents, and the lack of free discussion

against the government, and also the absence of social justice, for to him the practice of religion involves existing social justice and Catholic Action, as Pius XI has said. Father Gillis did not think that Catholics have taken the words of Pius XI seriously enough. Besides the Papal allocution of 1926 and the encyclical of 1931, he mentioned that as late as Christmas 1938 the Pope renewed his protests against the regime. He was even aware, writing in April 1939, shortly after the death of the Pope, that the Pontiff had prepared a speech to be given on the tenth anniversary of the Lateran Treaty, which was to be a condemnation of the regime for not carrying out its solemn contract.

The editor of the Catholic World saw in Pope Pius XI, an arch-enemy of Fascism, a man dedicated to the interests of the Church, who was not in the least a politician making deals with the Fascist government, but rather a fearless critic of the regime who worked out a necessary modus vivendi with the government which was in no way an approval of the regime as such. One has only objectively to read the encyclicals and addresses of the Pope to come to the same conclusion. For this reason the fact that Non Abbiamo Bisogno was journalistically killed by so much of the Catholic press was most disconcerting to the editor of the Catholic World.⁵⁰

In this regard it is true that that part of the Catholic

⁵⁰Ibid., 1-9.

press which favored Fascism wielded an influence far out of proportion to its adherents in the whole Catholic world, causing a certain amount of harm, for non-Catholics who read that part of the Catholic press thought that the Catholic Church and the Fascist government were allied. This was especially true in England,⁵¹ whereas it has been shown that the Church and Fascism pursued two different policies.⁵² Comparing the recently deceased Pope with Mussolini, Father Gillis said that in future generations the Italian people would glory in Pius XI who did so much to promote peace, rather than in the bellicose Mussolini against whom the Pope so often protested.⁵³

The Catholic World made specific mention of the policy of America with regard to the conflict between the Pope and the Duce thereby giving its viewpoint on the reaction of America to Fascism. It complimented the Jesuit review for not avoiding the issue or toning it down, but on the other hand, for faithfully supporting the Holy Father whenever the occasion demanded it.⁵⁴ It made no mention of the Commonweal.

America in the pre-war months almost took it for granted that Italy would not enter the conflict, in view of the fact that on December 28, 1939 Pius XII visited the Royal family of Italy,

⁵¹Binchy, p. 715.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 635-667.

⁵³Catholic World, CXLVIII (March 1939), 648.

⁵⁴Catholic World, CIL (April 1939), 3.

and because of what Mussolini had said regarding peace on certain occasions.⁵⁵ Even as late as June 1, 1940, ten days before Italy declared war, America mentioned the fact that Mussolini had seen war and all the destruction and terrible consequences which followed, and that magazine asked whether he might not remember this as he planned his next move.⁵⁶ From this, it is evident that America was hoping against hope that Mussolini would not fight, and of course, if he did not, he might have been considered one of the greatest statesmen of Europe. However, in view of all his military speeches, the question should be raised whether he could have refrained from entering the war. The Catholic World would certainly support this contention.

It is now necessary to examine the reaction of the Commonweal during this pre-war period. Michael Williams, who edited the magazine from its inception in 1924, retired as Editor-in-Chief in April 1938, at which time Edward Skillin Jr. and Philip Burnham became the editors. The policy of the magazine under the new editors remained the same toward Fascism, for all during the thirties Fascism was more and more criticized, and this attitude received its proper accentuation under the new editors. Michael Williams stayed on with the magazine as a special contributing editor, but the opinions in his newly founded weekly column were

⁵⁵ America, LXII (January 6, 1940), 338.

⁵⁶ America, LXIII (June 1, 1940), 199.

not connected with the official policy of the magazine.⁵⁷ Accordingly, his column will not be treated. Suffice it to say that, generally speaking, his reaction to Fascism was similar to the new editors.⁵⁸

Toward the end of 1937 the Commonweal said that the government of Italy was in the hands of a powerful and able ruler, but that his rule was not popular, nor did there seem to be any reason why it would become more popular.⁵⁹ A few months later it said the the government was attempting to win over public opinion to the side of war.⁶⁰ One year later the Commonweal pointed out that Hitler was making Mussolini his pawn, since Hitler was dominating Italian policy,⁶¹ and later it repeated the same charge as the deterioration of Fascism was becoming apparent.⁶² These comments culminated in an editorial which attempted to revive the picture of Mussolini which made him the arch adversary of Communism and the man of peace. The Commonweal castigated the idea that the regime of Mussolini was one of law and order which the

⁵⁷Commonweal, XLII (August 15, 1945), 428.

⁵⁸Commonweal, XXVIII (May 20, 1938), 101-2. It is interesting to note that Mr. Williams did not agree with the new editors with regard to the issues of the Spanish Civil War. XXVIII (June 24, 1938), 241-2.

⁵⁹Commonweal, XXVII (December 3, 1937), 142.

⁶⁰Commonweal, XXVII (February 18, 1938), 450.

⁶¹Commonweal, XXIX (January 27, 1939), 365.

⁶²Commonweal, XXIX (March 17, 1939), 563.

Pope could call on in his efforts for preserving peace in Europe. Rather the whole career of Mussolini would have lead one to the opposite conclusion. Consequently, Americans ought to take Mussolini for what he was, the leader of one aspect of the totalitarian revolution of the twentieth century.⁶³ As is evident from these remarks, the reaction of the Commonweal is very similar to that of the Catholic World, showing that the magazines are rapidly nearing unanimity in their attitudes toward the fading Fascist government.

In this study the attitude of the Commonweal has been the most difficult to assess, probably because it has said so much on so many aspects of Fascism; but that magazine gave a clue to its policy when it began to present signed editorials which would make it possible to speak with more forthrightness and precision. The Commonweal said, "In its editorials, the Commonweal has tried to express at best the general agreement--at worst, the lowest common denominator of disagreements--of its collaborators, unified as they are by the common framework of their thought. This has led on occasion to a certain 'editorial tone' which has prevented vigorous conclusiveness appropriate to certain issues. . . . More editorial paragraphs that are signed or initialed will permit greater freedom and definiteness of expression, greater de-

⁶³Commonweal, XXXI (March 8, 1940), 421.

cisiveness of personal conclusion than is otherwise possible."⁶⁴ For this reason the Commonweal decided on the policy of signed editorials.

The Second World War started when Hitler marched into Poland on September 1, 1939. In a series of rapid victories, he occupied Poland, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, France, and Belgium. Thinking that the war would be short, and not wanting to miss a share of the spoils, Mussolini plunged Italy into the war on June 10, 1940, on the side of Germany.⁶⁵

One month before Italy entered the war, the Catholic World asked why Fascism did not denounce the agreement between Hitler and Stalin if it had originated in order to combat Communism. Father Gillis found his answer in Mussolini's ambition for empire, and added that the Duce was risking Italy's independence by always playing second fiddle to Hitler.⁶⁶ As soon as Mussolini declared war, Father Gillis simply said that the declaration of war did not in the least change the dictator's character. Mussolini was not as complex to him as he was to so many others, as for instance one editor who distinguished between Mussolini the thinker who was good, and Mussolini the fighter who was bad. Father Gillis compared Mussolini to Jesse James, except that the

⁶⁴Commonweal, XXXII (June 1, 1940), 177.

⁶⁵Albrecht-Carrié, Italy from Napoleon to Mussolini, p. 269.

⁶⁶Catholic World, CLI (May 1940), 134-5.

western outlaw did not attempt to excuse himself when he committed^t wrong.⁶⁷

America said that Mussolini has "hurled forty-five million unwilling people into war on the side of a man whose notions they detest."⁶⁸ He had betrayed his own nation, for Italy had only tolerated the Axis. In addition America said that Mussolini had brought misery to his people, and had proved himself to be a gambler who was risking what was not his to risk. However, America recalled that the United States was still at peace with Italy.⁶⁹

The Commonweal, continuing its recent sharply anti-Fascist tone, said that during the period before Italy's entrance into the war Mussolini had intensified Italian national pride at the expense of hatred for other countries. Continuing it said that Mussolini ignored the truths of Christianity which involved the brotherhood of man, for he has used Catholicism as a political weapon.⁷⁰ Since the logic of Fascism relentlessly leads to war, it is no wonder that Mussolini is preparing a peace loving people for a struggle which they, having sworn to obey the Duce, will have to fight against their will.⁷¹ The Commonweal wanted it

⁶⁷Catholic World, CLI (July 1940), 385-7.

⁶⁸America, LXIII (June 22, 1940), 282.

⁶⁹Ibid., 294-5.

⁷⁰Commonweal, XXXI (March 15, 1940), 443.

⁷¹Commonweal, XXXII (May 10, 1940), 50; (May 17, 1940), 69.

known, as the Catholic World had always insisted, that its criticism of the regime in no way was to be extended to the Italian people.⁷²

Thus the Commonweal was attacking Fascism in the same manner as the Catholic World. America has not been so harsh. In keeping with its newly formed policy of being more precise in its editorials, the Commonweal presented its first signed editorial, on Italy's entrance into the war, by C.G. Paulding, an associate editor.

The crime, said Mr. Paulding, is that Fascism, a product of a revolution, has naturally issued forth into war, and that it has betrayed a Catholic people for a pagan totalitarian ideal. The declaration of war on England and France was prepared by eighteen years of Fascist action, and also by the inconsistency of Catholic leadership in the world which did not prove superior to Fascism. Accordingly, Fascism had ranked Italy on the side of National Socialism and Communism, and as such, the condemnation of Fascism should leave the realm of the theoretical and oppose war.⁷³ The Commonweal is not in the least convinced that the order which the Fascists have brought to Italy is sufficient reason for condoning the acts of the government.⁷⁴

⁷²Commonweal, XXXII (May 24, 1940), 90.

⁷³C.G. Paulding, "The Revolution Develops," Commonweal, XXXII (June 21, 1940), 177-8.

⁷⁴Commonweal, XXXIII (November 8, 1940), 67.

That Italy was unprepared for war was known to Mussolini, but while he did not think that the war would be long Italy was at war for over three years. Her military record was inglorious due to the strain which the Ethiopian campaign and the subsequent aid to Spain placed on her resources. Other key factors for the poor showing of Italy were the inefficiency of the government and lack of popular support and enthusiasm for the war.⁷⁵

By January 1943 nothing was left of Italy's African possessions, and finally on July 10, 1943, the Allies landed on Sicily to start the great Battle of Italy. Meanwhile the situation of the Italian government had become desperate, Mussolini's resignation being demanded by the Fascist Grand Council. As a result, on July 26th, the King dismissed Mussolini and appointed Marshall Badoglio Prime Minister. One of the first acts of Badoglio was the dissolution of the Fascist party which was received by the people with no opposition whatsoever.⁷⁶ Thus Fascism, which had promised so much to the Italian people, ended amid the efforts of the Italian people to escape from the folly which Fascism brought upon them. Finally the Badoglio government surrendered to the Allies on September 3, 1943, and nearly two years later, when Mussolini was killed while trying to escape from Milan, the puppet government in the North of Italy which Hitler had set up

⁷⁵Albrecht-Carrié, Italy from Napoleon to Mussolini, p. 270.

⁷⁶Ibid., 273.

after Italy surrendered to the Allies collapsed.⁷⁷

During the period preceding the fall of Mussolini, when Italy was proving her military weakness, America noted that the Italian people were never known for their martial spirit,⁷⁸ and that the help which Italy was giving to the Axis was not freely given by them, but rather because the tyrants in power forced them to do so.⁷⁹ This was proof for America that Fascism was fading very quickly in Italy.⁸⁰

During this same time, the Commonweal said that before the war in Ethiopia and the aid to Spain, one could argue about the merits of Italian Fascism, but that after these events the die was cast that logically would lead Italy into the Axis. As a result, the Italian people have received a set-back, for their hopes have been checked, since they are servants of a purpose which is not Italian.⁸¹ Mr. Paulding, in a signed editorial, pleaded for Americans to remember the Italian people and their cultural achievements, for they were becoming lost in a maze of statistics.⁸²

⁷⁷Hughes, The United States and Italy, p. 138.

⁷⁸America, LXVII (May 9, 1942), 115.

⁷⁹America, LXVII (June 6, 1942), 239.

⁸⁰America, LXVII (July 18, 1942), 394.

⁸¹Commonweal, XXXIII (April 4, 1941), 587.

⁸²C.G. Paulding, "Italian," Commonweal, XXXVI (July 17, 1942), 293.

Later, seemingly contradicting a previous statement, the Commonweal said that even before Ethiopia and Spain Fascism stood condemned, since it had made the state into an absolute which subordinated everything else to itself.⁸³

As the situation in Italy had become desperate, the Catholic World mentioned that one of its readers had gone back and studied some of Father Gillis' editorials of years ago in which it was clear that he had refused to be misled, as so many other American editors had been, by the bulldozing and browbeating of Mussolini, which these editors said had gotten results. Again Father Gillis spoke of those Catholics who condoned most of Mussolini's actions, which were based on a state absolutism, because he put the crucifix back in the schoolrooms and re-erected the Stations of the Cross in the Coliseum; whereas, really Fascism could not be compatible with the doctrine expressed in Pope Leo's encyclical on the Christian constitution of states, or Pius XI's encyclical on Catholic Action. Had not Napoleon also granted benefits to religion and also signed a Concordat with a Pope whom he then proceeded to persecute? For fifteen years these ideas were to be found in the Catholic World, and now as one looks back, it is amazing that there were so many who advised the Italians to overlook the anti-democratic attitude and erroneous theory of the state which Mussolini proposed, or to overlook his conquest of

⁸³Commonweal, XXXVII (December 11, 1942), 197.

the naked Ethiopians in view of the fact that the trains were running on time and the beggars had disappeared from the streets, and because Fascism was a protection against Communism, when really the trains were not running on time, and the beggars had not disappeared, and Fascism has proved itself a twin of Communism. All this was done by a man who had been an atheist, and might still be an atheist. Father Gillis concluded this editorial by taking no credit for seeing what an impartial observer could not help but see.⁸⁴

In June 1943 when the invasion of Italy was imminent and the end of Fascism was near, the editor of the Catholic World became most concerned about the relationship of the Pope and the Church to Mussolini and Fascism, for the situation of the Church in Italy after Fascism was precarious. Father Gillis quoted from Dr. Daniel A. Binchy's book, Church and State in Fascist Italy, in which the author proffered a somewhat bleak outlook for the Church in Italy after the war, no matter what form of government would follow. Father Gillis then went into a discussion of the relationship of Fascism to Catholicism to see whether the Church was morally and spiritually allied with Fascism.

However, the merits of Dr. Binchy's book, which has been referred to freely throughout this study, deserve first attention. The book was published in England in 1941, but only became avail-

⁸⁴Catholic World, CLVI (January 1943), 387-9.

able in the United States some time later because of the war. It was the first ^hexhaustive study of the relations between the Church and the State in Fascist Italy to appear in any language. The author, a Professor of Legal History and Jurisprudence in University College, Dublin spent four years in assembling the material, and two years in writing the book. It is a work of outstanding merit which no one who intends to talk seriously on the subject of Fascism, much less on Fascism and Catholicism, can afford not to read.⁸⁵

According to Father Gillis this scholarly 775 page book substantiates in detail everything which he had been trying to say in his editorials of Fascism before the documentation was available. Scrutinizing Fascism for its philosophical content, Binchy shows that it is a compound of Sorel, Gentile, Hegel, and Maurras which made the state omnipotent and supreme to the point that it was absolute. With regard to the Church, it is the conclusion of Binchy that its main value for the Fascists was that of a stabilizing influence in the country. It is hard to explain how some

⁸⁵Catholic World, CLVI (June 1943), 225-6. Cf. the following statement of Sturzo, Nationalism and Internationalism, p.59:

"Binchy's book, Church and State in Fascist Italy (which ends at the very date of Pius XI's death), can be regarded as the most serious and conscientious work ever written on this theme not only by Catholics (since Binchy is a Catholic) but even by non-Catholics of any country. In it we find breadth of view, precision of fact, abundance of detail, information concerning the attendant circumstances, liberty of appraisal, and independence of judgment."

Catholics who saw no incompatibility between Catholicism and Fascism did not take note when in 1932 the Holy See placed all of Gentile's works on the Index. How could Catholic laymen and clerics fail to see the blasphemy which not only Gentile, but Mussolini himself was preaching? Mussolini said that Fascism depended on state absolutism before which all individuals and groups are relative, since individuals and groups are thinkable only in so far as they come within the ambit of the state. This Fascist theory about the non-existence of the individual apart from the state is for Father Gillis the essence of totalitarianism, the principal evil in the world of the twentieth century, a heresy which violates the God-given rights of man.

Even more anti-Catholic is Mussolini's glorification of war. Mussolini does not believe in perpetual peace; rather he regards it as harmful to man. All the youth are educated for war. Sorrel's principle of violence for its own sake is extolled, as is also hatred for the enemies of Fascism. How can all this be reconciled with Christian charity?

For a priest the most humiliating passages in Dr. Binchy's book are those which deal with the extreme praise of Mussolini by some churchmen in Italy, as for instance when a body of elderly ecclesiastics shouted "Duce, Duce" in a wild demonstration of support for the regime. There were many Italian churchmen who openly defended the Ethiopian War as just and holy; but Binchy was careful to point out that, as a whole, the Italian Church did

not favor Fascism, a very important point. Many Italian churchmen jeopardized their chances of promotion, and others were imprisoned for their opposition to the regime.

It is with delight that Father Gillis follows Dr. Binchy's book to the part which treats of the courage of Pope Pius XI in his opposition to the excesses of the regime. The Pope tried to keep peace with Mussolini, but he found that it was impossible. In 1929 the Pope said that objective totalitarianism which swallowed up the individual and the family, if put in practice, would be a monstrosity. In 1931 he condemned the monopoly of the young for the sake of a regime based on a pagan worship of the state. He also denounced racism as it appeared in Italy, and the love of war and violence also received his stern opposition. Finally, the Pope often warned of the curse of the times--exaggerated nationalism. In view of the essential incompatibility between Fascism and Catholicism as evidenced by the fight between the Pope and the Duce, Father Gillis concluded this long and interesting editorial by saying that Catholicism ought not to be punished for the evils of Fascism, and accordingly, the future of the Church in Italy should not be bleak.⁸⁶

There can be no doubt that Dr. Binchy's book is a vindication of the basic position of Father Gillis with regard to Fascism, for Binchy reveals the true motives of Mussolini and the

⁸⁶Ibid., 225-234.

shallowness of the regime. Viewing the whole reign of Pius XI as a whole, Binchy's conclusion is that the Vatican did not favor Fascism. However, he admits that too many individual Catholics in Italy, England, and from elsewhere were too sympathetic to it. These philo-Fascists simply did not take the Pope's words and actions as they should have been taken, namely as a cry of resistance against the excesses of the government.

The Commonweal ran a favorable review of Dr. Binchy's book by Count Carlo Sforza.⁸⁷ On the other hand, America strangely made no mention of the book in any article, editorial, or book review, maybe because the book did not reach the United States for some time after its publication in England. Nonetheless, its silence is of interest and possible reasons for it would lead one to think that the omission was intended. Even today Church and State in Fascist Italy is the most authoritative study on the subject in English.

When Fascism actually did come to an end in July 1943, America immediately went to the defense of the Pope, calling him the arch-enemy of Fascism, and his conflict with Mussolini a most important reason for the fall of Mussolini. America said that the split between the Pope and the Duce shortly after the Lateran Treaty in 1929 contributed much more than one would expect to the Duce's fall from power. In 1931 Pius XI clearly saw the incom-

⁸⁷ Carlo Sforza, "Church and State in Fascist Italy," Commonweal, XXXV (March 20, 1942), 526-30.

patibility of Fascism with Catholic educational principles. Even though Mussolini visited the Pope in 1932, an event which seemed to bode good for the future, the split had already taken place, and Mussolini's ambition for world empire, together with the introduction of Nazi pagan ideology into Italy, only made the rift deeper.⁸⁸

As the American troops moved up through the Italian peninsula, America in a stirring editorial noted that the United States and Europe were meeting for the first time, and that in order that our country understand Europe it was necessary to understand the Christian culture which was deeply embedded in Europe. Many of the United States' news correspondents were surprised to find that it was mainly the influence of the Church which relieved the Italians from the poison of Fascism. America continued that if one studied the Fascist press, there was no doubt that it would prove even to the hardest of liberals that the Pope was the arch-enemy of Fascism. It was the Pope who more than anyone else prevented Italy from becoming as bad as Germany. Pius XI fought Mussolini from the early days of Fascism. The Pope's attitude to the Rome-Berlin axis and to Hitler's visit to Rome was known to all, for when the German dictator came to Rome, the Pope left for Castelgondolfo, and said that a cross had come to Rome which was hostile to the cross of Christ. Thus Hitler was unable to obtain

⁸⁸America, LXIX (August 7, 1943), 491-2.

a much desired audience with the Pope. A few months later the Pope accused Mussolini of imitating Hitler in persecuting the Jews, declaring that spiritually all Christians are related to the Jews. Finally, the last Christmas address of the Pope was a stern denunciation of Fascism, and it is also known that the Pope was to deliver a strong rebuke of Fascism on February 11, 1939, but he died the previous day. Since unlike Germany, the Italian people were able to hear the truth from the Osservatore Romano, the Vatican radio, and Papal addresses, the Italians could not be poisoned with the Church carefully watching, and for this reason it should not be a surprise for Americans to find that the Italian mind was not Fascist, for it was Catholic.⁸⁹

The Commonweal reacted to the fall of Mussolini and Fascism saying that now nothing stood in the way for the United States to make peace with Italy.⁹⁰ Mr. Paulding, in a signed editorial, said that it would be difficult for the Italian people to forget the Fascist regime and the consent they gave to it, for hardly anyone spoke out against Mussolini; rather Mussolini did all the talking, and he was the government.⁹¹ In response to the charge that the House of Savoy was responsible for Fascism, Mr. Paulding contended that Mussolini was the guilty one. The United States

⁸⁹ America, LXX (November 6, 1943), 127-8.

⁹⁰ Commonweal, XXXVIII (September 17, 1943), 527-8.

⁹¹ C. G. Paulding, "Mussolini," Commonweal, XXXVIII (August 6, 1943), 385.

fought only Fascism, not the history of modern Italy.⁹²

When Mussolini fell from power, the culmination of everything Father Gillis of the Catholic World had been trying to say for twenty years came to pass. His editorial on that occasion therefore merits special quoting:

Over a period of years I received plenty of abuse for saying that Mussolini was the evil genius of the Italian people. I have been scolded and warned and threatened. One priest fresh from Rome at the time of the Albanian or the Ethiopian campaign, said with a tremor in his voice, 'they would stick you in the back with a knife as quickly as they would look at you.' They did stick me in the back but not with a knife. I would not care to go into the details, now that it is all over, because I should have to name and perhaps embarrass some prominent persons--not all of them lay-folk. But I confess that I have wondered a little of late what has happened to hundreds of those who wrote to tell me I didn't know what I was talking about. Strangely enough certain 'good Catholics' insisted that I was all wrong about the Duce and Fascism even after the appearance of the Holy Father's devastating Encyclical Non Abbiamo Bisogno. As for my not knowing 'what it was all about,' when Binchy's Church and State in Fascist Italy appeared on this side ten months ago, I discovered that I had been saying for twenty years what he was to say with much more abundant documentation and with more authority. . . . Perhaps I may be pardoned a little natural satisfaction in the fact that when almost all Italians, the majority of Europeans and a considerable number of Americans were deceived by the bombastic impostor who has now so tragically fallen, the Catholic World carried no word of eulogy of him, not one syllable of praise for his alleged rescue of Italy from Communism and not one iota of apology or justification of his militaristic policy. We did not even speak of him, though many did, as a harmless braggadocio. We never for a moment imagined his boastings and bellowings to be funny. They were as dangerous as the sword rattling speeches of Kaiser Wilhelm before 1914. Mussolini was the greatest menace to peace and civilization since Napoleon Bonaparte. He more than any other one man, is re-

⁹²C.G. Paulding, "Guilt," Commonweal, XXXVIII (September 17, 1943), 529.

sponsible for the calamity that has now come upon the whole world. He was exemplar, tutor, beau ideal to Adolf Hitler. His invasion of Ethiopia and Albania (looked upon at the time by American admirers as regrettable but not important) was a paradigm for the atrocities that took place later in Czechoslovakia and Poland. He said in effect to his German understudy, 'Go thou and do likewise; you can get away with it.' There may be--there doubtless is-- a vast background of causes of the present global war, but the prime occasion, if not the efficacious cause, was Benito Mussolini.⁹³

Again it is admitted that Father Gillis' emphasis on Mussolini as a cause of the war is too excessive. Nevertheless, Mussolini was a most important cause of the war, and if the reaction of the world to Mussolini had been more adverse, the chances of there being a war would have been less.

Although the climax of this study has been reached in the fall of Fascism and the reaction of the periodicals to it, it will be good to mention a few more matters that are connected with the central problem. In 1943, when Fascism fell, Messrs. Gaetano Salvemini and George LaPiana produced a book, What to Do With Italy? The problem in this book is the relation of the theory and the practice of the Catholic Church to modern democracy. According to the authors, both bitter enemies of Fascism, the Church is incompatible with democracy, the proof being the alleged favoring of many bishops, Vatican personalities, and both Pius XI and Pius XII of Fascism. All three of the magazines took up the challenge in articles dealing with the book. It is our purpose here

⁹³Catholic World, CLVII (September 1943), 562.

merely to point out the controversy.⁹⁴

There was also an interesting correspondence controversy in the pages of the Commonweal throughout the summer of 1945. In a series of letters to the editor under the title "The Church and the 'Isms,'" the question was asked whether or not the Church sufficiently realized the Fascist threat of Germany and Italy, or whether she soft-peddled it while vigorously opposing Communism. Again, this is merely pointed out.⁹⁵

Finally, the inglorious death of Mussolini drew a last reaction from two of the magazines. Because of all the Catholic World has already said about Fascism, it is easy to see that no further mention was made by that magazine even on the death of the Duce. The Commonweal said that it was hard to understand how the killing of Mussolini could be universally acclaimed as an act of justice, but that there was a certain poetic justice in the

⁹⁴See Wilfrid Parsons, "The Future of Italy," Catholic World, CLVIII (November 1943), 172-9; Luigi Sturzo, "The Church and Democracy and Salvemini-LaPiana," America, LXX (November 6, 1943), 117-20; Mario Einaudi, rev. of Gaetano Salvemini and George LaPiana, What to Do With Italy, (New York, 1943), America, LXX (November 6, 1943), 131-2; Luigi Sturzo, "The Vatican and Fascism," Commonweal, XXXIX (December 17, 1943), 228-31; Gaetano Salvemini and George LaPiana, "Don Sturzo, the Vatican, Fascism," Commonweal, XXXIX (January 28, 1944), 369-71; Luigi Sturzo, "Beyond Salvemini-LaPiana," Commonweal, XXXIX (February 25, 1944), 467-9, (Confer also p. 364).

⁹⁵"Communications," (Letters to the editor are classified under this title), Commonweal, XLII (June 1, 1945 to September 28, 1945), 165-167, 237-239, 332-333, 403-404, 477-479, 574-576.

manner of his death, in that he was caught fleeing for his life.⁹⁶ Later the same magazine said that extracts from the dairy of Count Ciano, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, showed that Mussolini was alone in his declaration of war. His narrow and closed world had no room for the Pope or the King or the Italian people in this decision.⁹⁷

America claimed that Mussolini violated the great tradition of law and justice of the Romans. America also saw a poetic justice in his death, a death more degrading than any of the victims of Fascism.⁹⁸

⁹⁶Commonweal, XLII (May 11, 1945), 84.

⁹⁷Commonweal, XLII (August 3, 1945), 372.

⁹⁸America, LXXIII (May 12, 1945), 114-5.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

It has been our purpose to investigate the reaction of a part of the American Catholic press to Italian Fascism. As this has been done in the previous two chapters, it is now necessary to conclude. We feel that the issues raised are of momentous importance for one who is trying to arrive at an understanding of the place of the Catholic Church in world affairs. The modern world is without a doubt still in the period of crisis which started in 1914. The state has come to take on tremendous importance and proportions, with the result that the twentieth century can be called the age of totalitarianism. The Catholic Church has directly encountered this monster in many countries, in particular it has met it in Fascist Italy.

Specifically, we have been concerned with the attitude towards Italian Fascism of a small part of the American Catholic press. First we studied the reaction of the periodicals to the first half of the regime in Italy, in which the authoritarian nature of the government emerged, as did the peculiar Italian problem of the relations between the Church and the State, and then we examined Fascism as it met with the other countries of a

confused and troubled Europe. The reaction of the three magazines to events in the Italian peninsula has carried the study to its conclusion.

The two central chapters afford the clue to the conclusion, for the reaction found in the first half is different from the reaction of the second half. In the early years of Fascism, the Catholic World's policy differed from that of America and the Commonweal, for the Catholic World was opposed to Fascism, while the other two magazines were not. But in the second part unanimity of reaction was nearly reached. Throughout the thirties America and the Commonweal more and more reached the position of opposition which the Catholic World entertained since the early twenties, the Commonweal coming closer than America. Thus it is seen that Catholic magazines differed concerning Fascism at different times. From what Father Gillis has said, one sees that his policy was the more uncommon one in this country, especially in the early years of the regime. However, while Father Gillis' position is the less common one, it is the one most compatible with Dr. Binchy's scholarly study of the period.

Throughout, the question has continually risen whether the Holy See was too favorable to Fascism. All three of the magazines rightly and laboriously defended the Papacy in this regard. Likewise, the question arises whether or not the three magazines of the thesis showed signs of philo-Fascism. In the twenties America and the Commonweal did show some such signs, but in the

thirties their policies changed, the Commonweal swinging more to the side of the Catholic World than did America. Viewing the reaction of all the periodicals over the more than twenty year period as a whole, one must conclude that the reaction was satisfactory.

Yet at the same time, the reaction of the Catholic World must be sharply distinguished from that of America and the Commonweal. It is our contention that the Catholic World deserves special recognition for its penetrating insight into Fascism from the earliest days of that phenomenon. It is more important that the Catholic World was able to analyse the worth of Fascism from its start, than that America and the Commonweal were not able to do so until the thirties, for very few were able to see the direction Fascism would take. It seems that the difference of opinion concerning Fascism in the twenties was over the nature of the regime, the Catholic World viewing it as totalitarian, which it was, the other two magazines considering it as an authoritarian government only.

On the theoretical level all the magazines would agree that Fascism was to be condemned, but the question must also be answered on the practical level. In the twenties America and the Commonweal did not view Fascism in practice the same way as the Catholic World. In the thirties all saw it for what it was, namely an evil which placed the state before the individual. Again, as was mentioned, what is amazing is that the Catholic

World saw Fascism for what it was, one aspect of the totalitarian revolution of the twentieth century, before the others. Father Gillis' voice proved to be right in view of the inglorious end of the particular form of government in Italy from 1922 to 1943. If America and the Commonweal reacted satisfactorily to Fascism, the Catholic World reacted excellently.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by **Samuel Anthony Marotta, S.J.** has been read and approved by three members of the Department of **History.**

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

April 8, 1959
Date

Charles H. Metzger, S.J.
Signature of Adviser